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Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 21 September 2011, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 110

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/66/1)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the decision taken at its 2nd plenary meeting, held on 16 September 2011, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization, under agenda item 110. I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: Late next month a child will be born — the 7 billionth citizen of our planet Earth. Let us assume this child is a girl. Most likely, she will be poor. She may, or may not, grow up to be healthy and strong. If she is especially lucky, she will be educated and go out into the world, full of hopes and dreams. Beyond that, we know only one thing with certainty: she will enter a world of vast and unpredictable change — environmental, economic, geopolitical, technological and demographic.

The world's population has tripled since the United Nations was created. And our numbers keep growing, as do the pressures on land, energy, food and water. The global economic crisis continues to shake businesses, Governments and families around the world. Joblessness is rising. Social inequalities grow wider. Too many people live in fear.

The United Nations exists to serve those in whose name it was conceived: "We the peoples". During the past five years as United Nations Secretary-General, I have travelled the world to meet people where they live, to hear their hopes and fears. Two weeks ago I visited Kiribati and the Solomon Islands. Villagers told me of their fear of climate change. Rising seas are washing into their homes. One day, they may be swept away entirely.

A young girl named Tamauri mustered her courage to speak. "What will become of us?" she asked. "What can the United Nations do for us?" Today, I pose her question to all of you — heads of State and Government and leaders of the world. What can we do? How can we help these people find greater peace, prosperity and justice in a world of crises?

As I reflect on my time in office during the past five years, I am full of passionate conviction — unshakable faith in the enduring importance of this noble United Nations. Today, I would like to share with the Assembly my perspective on the way ahead. As I see it, we have five imperatives, five generational opportunities to shape the world of tomorrow by the decisions we make today.

The first and greatest of these is sustainable development — the imperative of the twenty-first century. Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty and advancing economic growth — those are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, the food crisis and women's empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all. Rio+20 must succeed. We must make

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progress on climate change. We cannot burn our way to the future. We cannot pretend the danger does not exist or dismiss it because it affects someone else.

Today, I call on those gathered here to reach a binding climate change agreement, one with more ambitious national and global emissions targets. And we need action on the ground, now, on cutting emissions and on adaptation.

(*spoke in French*)

Energy is key — key to our planet and our way of life. That is why we have launched a new pioneering initiative entitled "Sustainable energy for all".

We must invest in human potential, specifically in education and in the health of women and children. Development cannot be called sustainable unless it is equitable and benefits all.

We must step up our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and go even further. Today, I call upon the Assembly to take a larger view, to think beyond the horizon of 2015. Let us decide on a new generation of sustainable development goals that will succeed the MDGs, and let us agree on ways to make them real.

(*spoke in English*)

We have a second great opportunity before us, namely, prevention.

This year, the United Nations peacekeeping budget will total $8 billion. Consider the savings if we act before conflicts erupt, by deploying political mediation missions, for example, rather than troops. We know how to do this. Our record proves it — in Guinea, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan.

To prevent violations of human rights, we must work for the rule of law and stand against impunity. We have carved out new dimensions for the responsibility to protect, and we will continue. To prevent runaway damage from natural disasters, we must work for better disaster-risk reduction and preparedness.

Let us remember: development is ultimately the best prevention. Today, I ask for your support. Let us commit the resources required. Let us raise prevention from an abstract concept to a core operating principle across the spectrum of our work.

There is a third imperative: building a safer and more secure world — our core responsibility at the United Nations. This year we were sorely tested.

In Côte d'Ivoire, we stood firm for democracy and human rights. Working closely with our regional partners, we made a difference in the lives of millions of people. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we will carry out our missions with determination and commitment to the people of these proud nations.

In Darfur, we continue to save lives and help keep peace under difficult conditions. Our success demands the cooperation and full support of the international community, the parties on the ground and the Sudanese Government. In the Sudan, the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement must work together to prevent conflict and settle outstanding issues.

In the Middle East, we must break the stalemate. We have long agreed that Palestinians deserve a State. Israel needs security. Both want peace. We pledge our unrelenting efforts to help achieve that peace through a negotiated settlement.

We must be innovative in maximizing the unique force for good that is United Nations peacekeeping. We are pioneering new approaches. We have strengthened our field support and reconfigured the architecture of peacekeeping operations. In places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, we are building peace by advancing civil society, promoting the rule of law and creating institutions of honest and effective governance.

Today we are capable of more rapid and effective response than ever before, and we will so continue. We remain the world's first emergency responders — in Pakistan, Haiti and elsewhere. It is essential that we continue to build on our most innovative and effective tool for humanitarian relief — the Central Emergency Response Fund, also known as CERF.

Famine in Somalia continues to spread. I appeal to the Assembly: help save the children of the Horn of Africa.

As we learned in Fukushima and elsewhere, nuclear accidents do not respect national borders. We need global action. We need strong international safety standards to prevent future disasters.

Let us keep pushing on disarmament and non-proliferation. Let us fulfil the dream: a world free of nuclear weapons.

(*spoke in French*)

The fourth imperative is to support nations in transition.

The extraordinary events that have taken place this year in North Africa and the Middle East have been a source of inspiration. Let us make sure that the Arab Spring becomes a song of hope for all. In Libya, we are deploying a new United Nations support mission to assist the Libyan authorities in forming a new Government and a new legal order, which is the desire of the Libyan people. The current situation in Syria is of particular concern. For six months now, we have been seeing an escalation of violence and repression. The Government has repeatedly promised to adopt reforms and listen to the people. It has done nothing of the sort. Now is the time for action. The violence must end.

Others are also counting on us. A country emerging from war puts its autocratic regime behind it, brings its people out of poverty and turns towards new prosperity. The United Nations must assist such a country as it embarks upon the right path. Most likely it will have to help that country set up legal machinery and public services, organize elections, or write a new constitution.

Today, our task is to consolidate such progress and put in practice what we have learned from our experiences. The growing difficulty is most clearly seen in what we are doing to assist South Sudan set up functioning State structures after decades of conflict.

(*spoke in English*)

Fifth and finally, we can dramatically advance our efforts in every sphere with, and working for, women and young people.

Women hold up more than half the sky and represent much of the world's unrealized potential. They are the educators. They raise the children, and they hold families together. Increasingly, women drive economies. They are natural leaders. We need their full engagement — in Government, business and civil society. And this year, for the first time, we have UN-Women, our own unique and powerful engine for dynamic change.

I am especially pleased to see so many women at this year's session of the Assembly. I welcome in particular President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, the first woman in United Nations history to open the general debate. We can be proud of the number of women leaders we have at the United Nations, and we will continue our policy of promoting women at all levels of the Organization.

We will focus on the new generation. Young people are more than our future; they are also our present, both in numbers and in how they drive political and social change. We must find new ways to create decent jobs and opportunities for them around the world.

These are extraordinary challenges, and we cannot respond in ordinary ways. We need one thing above all else: solidarity. That begins with the obvious: without resources, we cannot deliver.

Today, I ask the Governments that have traditionally borne the lion's share of the costs not to flag in their generosity. Budgets are tight. Yet we also know that investing through the United Nations is smart policy. Sharing burdens makes the load lighter. Scaling back is no answer. To the rising Powers among you, whose dynamism increasingly drives the global economy, I say that with power comes responsibility. For all, I ask that you give what you can — expertise, peacekeepers, helicopters. Never underestimate the power of your leadership. Again and again, I have seen how the smallest nations make some of the largest contributions to our work.

Governments cannot do the job alone. To deliver for those in need, we must broaden our base and extend our reach. We must harness the full power of partnership across the Organization. Our successes in the fight against malaria show the way. We see the transformative power of partnership in our Every Woman, Every Child initiative, with funding commitments of more than $40 billion — four times the annual United Nations budget. When we combine the unparalleled convening authority and technical resources of the United Nations with the various strengths of Governments, the private sector and civil society, we are a formidable force for good.

(*spoke in French*)

Finally, we must change with the times. At this time of budgetary austerity, we must do more with less.

We must better invest taxpayers' money, eliminate waste and avoid duplication by delivering as one. Accountability and transparency remain our watchwords.

We are accountable to the Member States, yet we cannot become more efficient without their strong and consistent support. We must streamline the budget process and help the United Nations to undertake the necessary measures so that no nation must act on its own. We must maintain our efforts to build a more modern and mobile workforce — a United Nations that is faster and more flexible; a United Nations that innovates and draws on the power of social networks and new technologies; a United Nations that helps solve real problems in real time.

Lastly, let us do everything we can to protect United Nations staff. We have lost so many lives; the United Nations has become an easy target. Today let us remember with gratitude those who serve with such dedication in so many dangerous places.

(*spoke in English*)

Here in this great Hall, the shrinking islands in the Pacific may seem far away. Yet I hear that young girl's plea as clearly as if she were next to me. Perhaps that is because, 60 years ago, I was that child. The United Nations is the answer now, as it was then. Standing here today, I hear many millions of other young boys and girls asking for our help, looking for hope. "We the peoples", 7 billion, now look to us, the world's leaders. They need solutions. They demand leadership. They want us to act, to act with compassion, courage and conviction; to act in concert, nations united at the United Nations.

Let us carry on this journey together. I thank those gathered here very much for their leadership and commitment.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Secretary-General for his presentation.

Agenda item 8

General debate

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): It is indeed an honour for me to welcome participants to the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for members' active participation in the High-level Meetings over the past two days. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his outstanding leadership of the United Nations and for his initiative in organizing a number of important high-level events this week. I wish everyone great success in these important discussions.

Let there be no doubt that 2011 is a year of new horizons. A look around the Hall today shows just that: new faces and new friends. To everyone I say welcome to the global family. New friends and old, we will work together to ensure that the shifts taking place across the globe result in stable and prosperous democracies, continued growth and development, and the protection and promotion of human rights in the interest of all the citizens of the world.

We also welcome the newest Member State, South Sudan, to the United Nations. In doing so, it must be acknowledged that the issue of Palestine will be particularly crucial and will receive great attention this session. I look forward to working with all Member States for the attainment of a just, comprehensive and negotiated peace settlement in the Middle East, based on a two-State solution. I am fully committed to proceeding in a transparent, impartial manner and in keeping with the expressed will of the collective membership of the United Nations. Fairness and justice will be key pillars of any sustainable political endeavour.

Addressing the critical issues on the agenda of the Assembly's sixty-sixth session will require political will, open dialogue, close collaboration and consensus-building. For that reason, I am deeply and fully committed to working with each Member State, as well as with all major stakeholders, to build bridges for a united global partnership.

In carrying out our joint responsibilities, I place great value in South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as on dialogue among civilizations and advancing the culture of peace. I intend to accord the most vulnerable countries the support they so need and deserve. Let us therefore always bear in mind the need for just and fair solutions that are based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

In meeting the expectations of the world, it is our responsibility to remain thoughtful and focused on our objectives. Therefore, I have identified four key areas to help frame our work during this session: the

peaceful settlement of disputes, United Nations reform and revitalization, improving disaster prevention and response, and sustainable development and global prosperity.

With regard to United Nations reform and revitalization, we must continue our efforts throughout this session to revitalize the General Assembly to ensure its rightful place as the centre of global decision-making. We must make it more efficient and able to respond quickly to emerging situations of global concern. I am fully committed to strengthening previous efforts and to making further progress on reforming the Security Council, based on the collective will of the Member States.

On improving disaster prevention and response, I am deeply conscious of the tragic food and humanitarian crisis gripping Somalia. At this session I will be fully committed to focusing the Assembly's attention on that humanitarian crisis. I will count on the support and attention of Member States in order to improve our response to humanitarian disasters. And I will work closely with Member States to further improve prevention capacity and reduce risk and increase invulnerability with respect to natural hazards.

In working towards sustainable development and global prosperity as the world population approaches 7 billion next month, our efforts will become ever more pressing. This year, a number of major global conferences related to sustainable development will take place. They will focus on issues such as climate change and desertification, poverty eradication, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. I urge the leaders of the world to find consensus and to take strong and urgent action to ensure fruitful outcomes to these important meetings. I remain committed to supporting those discussions in any way that I can.

The theme before us today is "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes". The United Nations role in promoting international peace and security is foremost among its founding principles. From the very beginning, mediation has been a key tool for the peaceful settlement of disputes, with a specific reference to it in the United Nations Charter.

In today's world, the need to find peaceful means to resolve disputes has assumed greater relevancy and become more urgent than ever, and that is why I proposed this theme for the general debate. I look forward to hearing of the valuable views and experiences of the Member States. Such views and experiences will be useful in the deliberations of the General Assembly in the coming year.

I am also pleased that this issue is being dealt with by the Security Council, which tomorrow will hold a special meeting on preventive diplomacy. It is clear that the United Nations provides legitimacy and operational breadth and dimensions to mediation efforts.

I am pleased to note that in the preceding session, the Assembly adopted its first-ever resolution on mediation (resolution 65/283). With that resolution the Assembly took an important step in affirming support for strengthening mediation as a vital tool for conflict prevention and resolution. Member States also committed to strengthening the visibility of that matter.

It is of the utmost importance that Member States engage actively in the implementation of that resolution and in future activities of the General Assembly in the field of mediation. I also welcome and appreciate the recent developments in that context within the United Nations system.

It is my intention to accord high priority to mediation throughout this session, to galvanize that theme and operationalize it for a genuine multilateral capacity, with the support of Member States. I will do so in a transparent and interactive manner, by ensuring close coordination with the Secretary-General, Member States and other relevant actors.

It is significant that the world's leaders are gathered here today on the International Day of Peace, which is dedicated to achieving the ideals of peace within and among all nations and peoples. Let us join together, in the spirit of cooperation and partnership, to ensure peace, prosperity and dignity for all of humankind. I look forward to very successful debate and deliberations.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I would like to remind Member States that the list of speakers for the general debate has been established on the agreed basis that statements should be no longer than 15 minutes, so as to enable all speakers to be heard at any given meeting. Within this time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation into the six official United Nations languages may be properly provided.

I would also like to draw members' attention to the decision taken by the General Assembly at previous sessions, namely, that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged. In that connection, after delivering their statements, speakers are invited to exit the Hall through Room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the manner I have described, during the general debate of the sixty-sixth session?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Finally, I should like to draw the attention of members to the fact that during the general debate, official photographs of all the speakers are taken by the Department of Public Information. Members interested in obtaining photographs are requested to contact the Photo Library of the United Nations.

Address by Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Rousseff (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation provided by the delegation*): For the very first time in the history of the United Nations, a female voice is opening the general debate. It is the voice of democracy and equality that reverberates from a forum that is committed to being the most representative in the world. It is with a sense of personal humility, but with justifiable pride as a woman, that I greet this historic moment.

I share this emotion with more than half of the human beings on this planet, who, like me, were born women and who, with a sense of purposeful determination, are now taking the place in the world they rightly deserve. I am certain that this will be the century of women. In the Portuguese language, words such as life, soul and hope are feminine nouns. Two other words in Portuguese that are especially dear to me are also feminine, namely, courage and sincerity. And it is in a spirit of courage and sincerity that I wish to address the General Assembly today.

The world is experiencing an extremely delicate period, one that at the same time offers us a major historic opportunity. We face an economic crisis that, if not overcome, could become a source of serious political and social disruption, an unprecedented upheaval capable of causing serious imbalances in relationships between people and nations. More than ever before, the fate of the world is in the hands of its rulers and leaders, with no exceptions. Either we combine our efforts and emerge victorious together, or we will all emerge defeated. It is now less important to know or decide who caused the situation we are facing — because, after all, that is clear enough by now. What does matter is that we start finding collective, speedy and genuine solutions.

The current crisis is too serious to be managed by a few countries. Their Governments and central banks still have the greatest responsibility in implementing the process. Yet, since all countries suffer the consequences, all are entitled to participate in their solutions. It is not because of a lack of financial resources that the leaders of developed countries have not yet found a solution to the crisis. Rather, if I may put it this way, it is due to a lack of political resources and, at times, of clear ideas. There is a part of the world that has not yet found a balance between appropriate fiscal adjustments and correct and precise fiscal stimuli conducive to demand and growth. They have been caught in a trap that does not distinguish between partisan interests and the legitimate interests of society. The challenge posed by the crisis entails replacing outdated theories that belong to an old world with new proposals crafted for a new world.

While many Governments are shrinking, unemployment, the bitterest face of the crisis, is growing. There are already 205 million unemployed people in the world, of whom 44 million are in Europe and 14 million in the United States. Tackling this scourge and preventing it from spreading to other regions of the planet is vitally important. We women know better than anyone that unemployment is not just a statistic; it affects our families, children and

husbands. It takes away hope and leaves a trail of violence and pain.

It is quite telling that it is the President of an emerging country, a country experiencing almost full employment, who has come here today to speak in such stark terms of a tragedy that has mainly hit developed countries.

Like other emerging countries, Brazil has thus far been less affected by the global crisis. But we know that our ability to withstand the crisis is not unlimited. We are willing and able to help those countries that are already facing an acute crisis, while there is still time. A new kind of cooperation between emerging and developed countries is an historic opportunity to redefine, with solidarity and responsibility, the commitments that govern international relations.

The world of today faces a crisis that is at once of economics, governance and political coordination. There will not be a return to confidence and growth until we intensity coordination efforts among United Nations Member States and other multilateral institutions, including the Group of Twenty, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other organs.

The United Nations and those organizations must act urgently to send clear signals of political cohesion and macroeconomic coordination. For example, fiscal and monetary policies should be submitted to mutual assessment in such a way as to ultimately prevent undesirable effects on other countries, thus avoiding defensive reactions that in turn lead to a vicious circle.

The solution to the debt problem should be combined with economic growth. There are obvious signs that several advanced economies are on the threshold of recession, which will significantly hamper resolution of their fiscal problems.

It is clear that the priority for the world economy at this moment should be to solve the problems of those countries that are facing a sovereign debt crisis and reversing the current recession scenario. The most developed countries must establish coordinated policies to stimulate economies that have been extremely weakened by the crisis. Countries with emerging economies can help in that effort. Countries with a high surplus should strengthen their domestic markets and, as appropriate, make their foreign exchange rate policies more flexible in such a way that contributes to the eventual rebalancing of global demand.

Deepening the regulation of the financial system and controlling that inexhaustible source of instability is a pressing need. Controls must be imposed on the foreign-exchange war by adopting floating foreign-exchange regimes. The task at hand is about preventing the manipulation of foreign exchange that occurs not only through excessively expansionist monetary policies but also through an artificially fixed foreign exchange.

Without a doubt, the reform of multilateral financial institutions should continue, thus increasing the participation of emerging countries, which, as driving forces, are responsible for the growth of the world's economy. We should fight protectionism and all forms of commercial manipulation. They do increase competitiveness, but in a spurious, fraudulent fashion.

Brazil is doing its homework. With sacrifices, but at the same time with a sense of insightfulness, we have kept Government spending under strict control, to the point of generating a sizable surplus in Government accounts while ensuring that those steps will not compromise the success of our social policies or the pace of our investment and growth. We are also taking additional precautions to buttress our ability to withstand the crisis by strengthening our domestic market with income distribution and technological innovation policies.

For at least three years now, Brazil has reiterated — time and again, from this very podium — that we must all tackle the causes, and not only the consequences, of global instability. We have emphasized time and again the interrelations among development, peace and security. We have often underscored that development policies should be increasingly coupled with the Security Council's strategies in the pursuit of sustainable peace.

That is how we have acted as part of our commitments to Haiti and to Guinea-Bissau. As a leading country in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, Brazil has since 2004 undertaken humanitarian projects that integrate security and development. With deep respect for Haitian sovereignty, Brazil is proud to assist in the consolidation of democracy in that country.

We are in a position to provide a solidarity-based contribution to brotherly countries in the developing world in matters such as food security, agricultural technology, generation of clean and renewable energy and the fight against hunger and poverty.

Since late 2010, we have witnessed a series of grass-roots demonstrations that have come to be known as the Arab Spring. Brazil is the adopted homeland of many immigrants from that part of the world. Brazilians sympathize with the pursuit of an ideal that belongs to no culture in particular, because it is by definition universal: freedom.

The nations united here today must find a legitimate and effective way to aid those societies that cry out for reform — without, however, depriving their citizens of a lead role in the process. We strongly repudiate the brutal crack down episodes that victimize civilian populations. We remain convinced that for the international community, resort to force must always be the last alternative.

The quest for peace and security in the world cannot be limited to interventions in extreme situations only. We support the Secretary-General in his efforts to engage the United Nations in conflict prevention by tirelessly exercising diplomacy and promoting development. The world of today suffers from the painful consequences of interventions that have worsened existing conflicts. That has allowed terrorism to creep into areas where it previously did not exist, thus generating new cycles of violence and multiplying the number of civilian victims.

Much is said about the responsibility to protect, yet little is said about responsibility while protecting. These are concepts that we must develop and mature together. To that end, the role of the Security Council is critical, and the more legitimate its decisions are, the more appropriate that role will be. And the Council's very legitimacy increasingly depends upon its reform.

With each passing year, a solution to the lack of representativeness in the Security Council becomes an ever more urgent need, which in turn erodes its efficacy. Former Assembly President Joseph Deiss reminded me of an impressive fact, namely, that the debate on the proposed reform of the Security Council is now entering its eighteenth year.

We can delay no longer. The world needs a Security Council that reflects contemporary realities, a Council that will incorporate new permanent and non-permanent members, especially those representing developing countries.

Brazil is ready to take on its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Council. We have lived in peace with our neighbours for more than 140 years and have fostered successful integration and cooperation processes with them. Our Constitution expressly states our commitment to abstain from the use of nuclear energy for non-peaceful purposes. I am proud to say that Brazil is a driver of peace, stability and prosperity in the region and even beyond it.

In the Human Rights Council, we have drawn inspiration from our own history of endeavour as a nation. We desire for other countries what we desire for ourselves. Authoritarianism, xenophobia, poverty, capital punishment and discrimination are all sources of human rights violations. We know that violations occur in every country, without exception. We must recognize this reality, and we must accept criticism. We will ultimately benefit from criticism, and we should pointedly criticize flagrant violations wherever they occur.

I welcome South Sudan to our family of nations. Brazil is ready to cooperate with the youngest Member of the United Nations and to contribute to its sovereign development.

I regret, however, that from this podium I am still unable to welcome Palestine into full membership of the Organization. Brazil has recognized the Palestinian State as defined by the 1967 borders, in accordance with United Nations resolutions. Like most countries in the Assembly, we believe that the time has come for Palestine to be represented as a full Member in this forum.

The recognition of the Palestinian people's legitimate right to sovereignty and self-rule expands the possibilities and prospects for a lasting peace in the Middle East. Only a free and sovereign Palestine can respond to Israel's legitimate desire for peace with its neighbours, security within its borders and political stability in its region. I come from a country where descendents of Arabs and Jews are compatriots and live together in harmony, which is as it should be.

Brazil advocates for a global, comprehensive and ambitious agreement within the framework of the United Nations to fight climate change. To achieve

this, countries must shoulder their respective responsibilities. Brazil submitted a concrete, voluntary and significant proposal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions during the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. We hope to be able to make progress at the upcoming meeting in Durban by supporting developing countries in their efforts to reduce emissions, and at the same time ensuring that developed countries fulfil their obligations, beyond 2012, on the basis of new targets under the Kyoto Protocol.

Brazil will have the honour of hosting the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development — Rio+20 — in June of 2012. Along with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, I reiterate our invitation to all heads of State and Government to join us at that Conference next year.

Brazil has learned that fighting poverty is the best development policy, and that a genuine human rights policy must ultimately be based on reducing inequalities and discrimination between and among regions, people and genders. Brazil has made political, economic and social progress without compromising any of its democratic freedoms. We have met almost all of the Millennium Development Goals before 2015. Forty million Brazilian men and women have come up out of poverty and been lifted into the middle class. I am fully confident that we will achieve our goal of eradicating extreme poverty in Brazil by the end of my term in office.

In my country, women have been vital to the task of overcoming social inequalities. Our income distribution programmes place mothers as the central figures in the scheme. It is they who manage the resources that allow families to invest in the health and education of their children. Yet my country, like every other nation, still has to do much more when it comes to valuing women and asserting their status. In that regard, I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General for making women a priority during his tenure at the head of the United Nations. I particularly welcome the creation of UN-Women and the appointment of its Executive Director, Ms. Michelle Bachelet.

Besides speaking on behalf of my own beloved country, I feel that when I stand up here I am representing all the women of the world — the anonymous women, those who starve and cannot feed their children, those who are suffering from illnesses and cannot get treatment, those who are victims of violence or who are discriminated against at work, in society and in their family life, and those who labour at home to bring up future generations. I add my voice to those of the women who have dared to struggle, to take part in political and professional life, and who have thus gained the spheres of power that allow me to stand here today.

As a woman who was the victim of torture while in prison, I am all too aware of how important values such as democracy, justice, human rights and freedom are to all of us. It is my hope that these values will continue to inspire the work of this house of nations, where I am honoured to open the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obama: It is a great honour for me to be here today. I would like to talk to the General Assembly about a subject that is at the heart of the United Nations — the pursuit of peace in an imperfect world.

War and conflict have been with us since the beginning of civilization. But in the first part of the twentieth century, the advance of modern weaponry led to death on a staggering scale. It was that killing that

compelled the founders of this body to build an institution that was focused not just on ending one war, but on averting others; a union of sovereign States that would seek to prevent conflict while also addressing its causes.

No American did more to pursue that objective than President Franklin Roosevelt. He knew that a victory in war was not enough. As he said at one of the very first meetings on the founding of the United Nations, "We have got to make not merely peace, but a peace that will last".

The men and women who built this institution understood that peace is more than the absence of war. A lasting peace — for nations and individuals — depends upon a sense of justice and opportunity; of dignity and freedom. It depends upon struggle and sacrifice; on compromise and on a sense of common humanity.

One delegate to the San Francisco Conference, which led to the creation of the United Nations, put it well:

> "Many people have talked as if all we had to do to get peace was to say loudly and frequently that we loved peace and hated war. Now we have learned that no matter how much we love peace and hate war, we cannot avoid having war brought upon us if there are convulsions in other parts of the world".

The fact is, peace is hard, but our people demand it. Over nearly seven decades, even as the United Nations helped avert a third world war, we still live in a world scarred by conflict and plagued by poverty. Even as we proclaim our love for peace and hatred of war, there are still convulsions in our world that endanger us all.

I took office at a time of two wars for the United States. Moreover, the violent extremists who drew us into war in the first place — Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaida organization — remained at large. Today, we have set a new direction.

At the end of this year, America's military operation in Iraq will be over. We will have a normal relationship with a sovereign nation that is a member of the community of nations. That equal partnership will be strengthened by our support for Iraq — for its Government and its security forces, for its people and their aspirations.

As we end the war in Iraq, the United States and our coalition partners have begun a transition in Afghanistan. Between now and 2014, an increasingly capable Afghan Government and security forces will step forward to take responsibility for the future of their country. As they do, we are drawing down our own forces, while building an enduring partnership with the Afghan people.

So let there be no doubt: the tide of war is receding. When I took office, roughly 180,000 Americans were serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. By the end of this year, that number will be cut in half, and it will continue to decline. This is critical for the sovereignty of Iraq and Afghanistan, and to the strength of the United States as we build our nation at home.

Moreover, we are poised to end these wars from a position of strength. Ten years ago, there was an open wound and twisted steel; a broken heart in the centre of this city. Today, as a new tower is rising at Ground Zero, it symbolizes New York's renewal, even as Al-Qaida is under more pressure than ever before. Its leadership has been degraded. Osama bin Laden, a man who murdered thousands of people from dozens of countries, will never endanger the peace of the world again.

Yes, this has been a difficult decade. But today we stand at a crossroads of history, with the chance to move decisively in the direction of peace. To do so we must return to the wisdom of those who created this institution.

The founding Charter of United Nations calls upon us, to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reminds us that, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights". Those bedrock beliefs — in the responsibility of States and the rights of men and women — must be our guide.

In that effort, we have reason to hope. This year has been a time of extraordinary transformation. More nations have stepped forward to maintain international peace and security. More individuals are claiming their universal right to live in freedom and dignity.

Think about it. One year ago, when we met here in New York, the prospect of a successful referendum in South Sudan was in doubt. But the international community overcame old divisions to support the

agreement that had been negotiated to give South Sudan self-determination. Last summer, as a new flag went up in Juba, former soldiers laid down their arms, men and women wept with joy and children finally knew the promise of looking to a future that they will shape.

One year ago, the people of Côte d'Ivoire approached a landmark election. When the incumbent lost and refused to respect the results, the world refused to look the other way. United Nations peacekeepers were harassed, but they did not leave their posts. The Security Council, led by the United States, Nigeria and France, came together to support the will of the people. Côte d'Ivoire is now governed by the man who was elected to lead.

One year ago, the hopes of the people of Tunisia were suppressed. But they chose the dignity of peaceful protest over the rule of an iron fist. A vendor lit a spark that took his own life, but ignited a movement. In the face of a crackdown, students spelled out the word freedom. The balance of fear shifted from the ruler to those whom he ruled. Now the people of Tunisia are preparing for elections that will move them one step closer to the democracy that they deserve.

One year ago, Egypt had known one President for nearly 30 years. But for 18 days, the eyes of the world were glued to Tahrir Square, where Egyptians from all walks of life — men and women, young and old, Muslim and Christian — demanded their universal rights. We saw in those protesters the moral force of non-violence that has lit the world from Delhi to Warsaw, from Selma to South Africa — and we knew that change had come to Egypt and to the Arab world.

One year ago, the people of Libya were ruled by the world's longest-serving dictator. But faced with bullets and bombs and a dictator who threatened to hunt them down like rats, they showed relentless bravery. We will never forget the words of the Libyan who stood up in those early days of the revolution and said, "Our words are free now". It is a feeling one cannot explain. Day after day, in the face of bullets and bombs, the Libyan people refused to give back that freedom. And when they were threatened by the kind of mass atrocity that often went unchallenged in the past century, the United Nations lived up to its Charter. The Security Council authorized all necessary measures to prevent a massacre. The Arab League called for that effort. Arab nations joined a NATO-led coalition that halted Al-Qadhafi's forces in their tracks.

In the months that followed, the will of the coalition proved unbreakable, and the will of the Libyan people could not be denied. Forty-two years of tyranny were ended in six months. From Tripoli to Misurata to Benghazi — today, Libya is free. Yesterday, the leaders of a new Libya took their rightful place beside us, and this week the United States is reopening our embassy in Tripoli.

This is how the international community is supposed to work — nations standing together for the sake of peace and security, and individuals claiming their rights. Now, all of us have a responsibility to support the new Libya and the new Libyan Government as they confront the challenge of turning this moment of promise into a just and lasting peace for all Libyans.

So this has been a remarkable year. The Al-Qadhafi regime is over. Gbagbo, Ben Ali and Mubarak are no longer in power. Osama bin Laden is gone, and the idea that change could come only through violence has been buried with him. Something is happening in our world. The way things have been is not the way that they will be. The humiliating grip of corruption and tyranny is being pried open. Dictators are on notice. Technology is putting power into the hands of the people. Youth are delivering a powerful rebuke to dictatorship and rejecting the lie that some races, some peoples, some religions and some ethnicities do not desire democracy. The promise written down on paper — "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" — is closer at hand.

But let us remember: Peace is hard. Peace is hard. Progress can be reversed. Prosperity comes slowly. Societies can split apart. The measure of our success must be whether people can live in sustained freedom, dignity and security. And the United Nations and its Member States must do their part to support those basic aspirations. And we have more work to do.

In Iran, we have seen a Government that refuses to recognize the rights of its own people. As we meet here today, men, women and children are being tortured, detained and murdered by the Syrian regime. Thousands have been killed, many during the holy time of Ramadan. Thousands more have poured across Syria's borders. The Syrian people have shown dignity

and courage in their pursuit of justice, protesting peacefully, standing silently in the streets and dying for the same values that this institution is supposed to stand for. And the question for us is clear: Will we stand with the Syrian people or with their oppressors?

Already, the United States has imposed strong sanctions on Syria's leaders. We supported a transfer of power that would be responsive to the Syrian people. And many of our allies have joined in this effort. But for the sake of Syria — and the peace and security of the world — we must speak with one voice. There is no excuse for inaction. Now is the time for the Security Council to sanction the Syrian regime and to stand with the Syrian people.

Throughout the region, we will have to respond to the calls for change. In Yemen, men, women and children gather by the thousands in towns and city squares every day with the hope that their determination and spilled blood will prevail over a corrupt system. America supports those aspirations. We must work with Yemen's neighbours and our partners around the world to seek a path that allows for a peaceful transition of power from President Saleh, and a movement to free and fair elections as soon as possible.

In Bahrain, steps have been taken towards reform and accountability. We are pleased with that, but more is required. America is a close friend of Bahrain, and we will continue to call on the Government and the main opposition bloc — al-Wifaq — to pursue a meaningful dialogue that brings peaceful change that is responsive to the people. We believe the patriotism that binds Bahrainis together must be more powerful than the sectarian forces that would tear them apart. It will be hard, but it is possible.

We believe that each nation must chart its own course to fulfil the aspirations of its people. America does not expect to agree with every party or person who expresses themselves politically, but we will always stand up for the universal rights that were embraced by this Assembly. Those rights depend on elections that are free and fair, governance that is transparent and accountable, respect for the rights of women and minorities, and justice that is equal and fair. That is what our people deserve. Those are the elements of peace that can last.

Moreover, the United States will continue to support, with greater trade and investment, those nations that transition to democracy, so that freedom is followed by opportunity. We will pursue deeper engagement with Governments, but also with civil society — students and entrepreneurs, political parties and the press. We have banned those who abuse human rights from travelling to our country and we have sanctioned those who trample on human rights abroad. And we will always serve as a voice for those who have been silenced.

Now, I know, particularly this week, that for many in this Hall, there is one issue that stands as a test of these principles and a test of American foreign policy, and that is the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

One year ago, I stood at this podium and I called for an independent Palestine. I believed then, and I believe now, that the Palestinian people deserve a State of their own, but what I also said is that a genuine peace can be realized only between the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves. One year later, despite extensive efforts by America and others, the parties have not bridged their differences. Faced with this stalemate, I put forward a new basis for negotiations in May of this year. That basis is clear. It is well known to all of us here. Israelis must know that any agreement provides assurances for their security. Palestinians deserve to know the territorial basis of their State.

I know that many are frustrated by the lack of progress; I assure them that I am too. But the question is not the goal that we seek. The question is: How do we reach that goal? And I am convinced that there is no shortcut to the end of a conflict that has endured for decades. Peace is hard work. Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the United Nations. If it were that easy, it would have been accomplished by now. Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians who must live side by side. Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians — not us — who must reach agreement on the issues that divide them: on borders and on security, on refugees and on Jerusalem.

Ultimately, peace depends upon compromise among people who must live together long after our speeches are over, long after our votes have been tallied. That is the lesson of Northern Ireland, where ancient antagonists bridged their differences. That is the lesson of the Sudan, where a negotiated settlement led to an independent State. And that is and will be the

path to a Palestinian State — negotiations between the parties.

We seek a future where Palestinians live in a sovereign State of their own, with no limit to what they can achieve. There is no question that the Palestinians have seen that vision delayed for too long. It is precisely because we believe so strongly in the aspirations of the Palestinian people that America has invested so much time and so much effort in the building of a Palestinian State and in the negotiations that can deliver a Palestinian State.

But understand this as well: America's commitment to Israel's security is unshakeable. Our friendship with Israel is deep and enduring. And so we believe that any lasting peace must acknowledge the very real security concerns that Israel faces every single day.

Let us be honest with ourselves: Israel is surrounded by neighbours that have waged repeated wars against it. Israel's citizens have been killed by rockets fired at their houses and suicide bombs on their buses. Israel's children come of age knowing that throughout the region other children are taught to hate them. Israel, a small country of less than 8 million people, looks out at a world where leaders of much larger nations threaten to wipe it off of the map. The Jewish people carry the burden of centuries of exile and persecution and fresh memories of knowing that 6 million people were killed simply because of who they are. Those are facts. They cannot be denied.

The Jewish people have forged a successful State in their historic homeland. Israel deserves recognition. It deserves normal relations with its neighbours. And friends of the Palestinians do them no favours by ignoring that truth, just as friends of Israel must recognize the need to pursue a two-State solution with a secure Israel next to an independent Palestine.

That is the truth. Each side has legitimate aspirations, and that is part of what makes peace so hard. And the deadlock will be broken only when each side learns to stand in the other's shoes and each side can see the world through the other's eyes. That is what we should be encouraging. That is what we should be promoting.

This body — founded as it was out of the ashes of war and genocide, and dedicated as it is to the dignity of every single person — must recognize the reality that is lived by the Palestinians and the Israelis alike. The measure of our actions must always be whether they advance the right of Israeli and Palestinian children to live lives of peace and security and dignity and opportunity. And we will succeed in that effort only if we can encourage the parties to sit down, to listen to each other and to understand each other's hopes and each other's fears. That is the project to which America is committed. There are no shortcuts. And that is what the United Nations should be focused on in the weeks and months to come.

Even as we confront these challenges of conflict and revolution, we must also recognize — and we must also remind ourselves — that peace is not just the absence of war. True peace depends on creating the opportunity that makes life worth living. And to do that, we must confront the common enemies of humanity: nuclear weapons and poverty, ignorance and disease. Those forces corrode the possibility of lasting peace and together we are called upon to confront them.

To lift the spectre of mass destruction, we must come together to pursue the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. Over the past two years, we have begun to walk down that path. Since our Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., nearly 50 nations have taken steps to secure nuclear materials from terrorists and smugglers. Next March, a summit in Seoul will advance our efforts to lock down all of them. The New START Treaty between the United States and Russia will cut our deployed arsenals to the lowest level in half a century, and our nations are pursuing talks on how to achieve even deeper reductions. America will continue to work for a ban on the testing of nuclear weapons and the production of fissile material needed to make them.

And so we have begun to move in the right direction. And the United States is committed to meeting our obligations. But even as we meet our obligations, we have strengthened the treaties and institutions that help stop the spread of those weapons. And to do so, we must continue to hold accountable those nations that flout them.

The Iranian Government cannot demonstrate that its programme is peaceful. It has not met its obligations and it rejects offers that would provide it with peaceful nuclear power. North Korea has yet to take concrete steps towards abandoning its weapons and continues

belligerent action against the South. There is a future of greater opportunity for the people of those nations if their Governments meet their international obligations. But if they continue down a path that is outside international law, they must be met with greater pressure and isolation. That is what our commitment to peace and security demands.

To bring prosperity to our people, we must promote the growth that creates opportunity. In this effort, let us not forget that we have made enormous progress over the past several decades. Closed societies gave way to open markets. Innovation and entrepreneurship have transformed the way we live and the things that we do. Emerging economies from Asia to the Americas have lifted hundreds of millions of people from poverty. It is an extraordinary achievement.

And yet, three years ago, we were confronted with the worst financial crisis in eight decades. And that crisis proved a fact that has become clearer with each passing year. Our fates are interconnected. In a global economy, nations will rise or fall together.

Today, we confront the challenges that have followed on the heels of that crisis. Around the world recovery is still fragile. Markets remain volatile. Too many people are out of work. Too many others are struggling just to get by. We acted together to avert a depression in 2009. We must take urgent and coordinated action once more.

Here in the United States, I have announced a plan to put Americans back to work and jump-start our economy, at the same time as I am committed to substantially reducing our deficits over time.

We stand with our European allies as they reshape their institutions and address their own fiscal challenges. For other countries, leaders face a different challenge as they shift their economy towards more self-reliance, boosting domestic demand while slowing inflation. So we will work with emerging economies that have rebounded strongly so that rising standards of living create new markets that promote global growth. That is what our commitment to prosperity demands.

To combat the poverty that punishes our children, we must act on the belief that freedom from want is a basic human right. The United States has made it a focus of our engagement abroad to help people to feed themselves. And today, as drought and conflict have brought famine to the Horn of Africa, our conscience calls on us to act. Together, we must continue to provide assistance and support organizations that can reach those in need. And together, we must insist on unrestricted humanitarian access so that we can save the lives of thousands of men and women and children. Our common humanity is at stake. Let us show that the life of a child in Somalia is as precious as any other. That is what our commitment to our fellow human beings demands.

To stop disease that spreads across borders, we must strengthen our system of public health. We will continue the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. We will focus on the health of mothers and of children. And we must come together to prevent and detect and fight every kind of biological danger — whether it is a pandemic like H1N1 or a terrorist threat or a treatable disease.

This week, America signed an agreement with the World Health Organization (WHO) to affirm our commitment to meeting that challenge. And today, I urge all nations to join us in meeting the WHO goal of making sure all nations have core capacities to address public health emergencies in place by 2012. That is what our commitment to the health of our people demands.

To preserve our planet, we must not put off action that climate change demands. We have to tap the power of science to save those resources that are scarce. And together, we must continue our work to build on the progress made in Copenhagen and Cancún, so that all the major economies represented here today follow through on the commitments that were made. Together, we must work to transform the energy that powers our economies and support others as they move down that path. That is what our commitment to the next generation demands.

To make sure our societies reach their potential, we must allow our citizens to reach theirs. No country can afford the corruption that plagues the world like a cancer. Together, we must harness the power of open societies and open economies. That is why we have partnered with countries across the globe to launch a new partnership on open Government that helps ensure accountability and helps to empower citizens. No country should deny people their rights to freedom of speech and freedom of religion, but also no country should deny people their rights because of whom they

love, which is why we must stand up for the rights of gays and lesbians everywhere.

No country can realize its potential if half its population cannot reach theirs. This week, the United States signed a new declaration on women's participation. Next year, we should each announce the steps we are taking to break down the economic and political barriers that stand in the way of women and girls. That is what our commitment to human progress demands.

I know there is no straight line to that progress, no single path to success. We come from different cultures, and carry with us different histories. But let us never forget that even as we gather here as Heads of different Governments, we represent citizens who share the same basic aspirations to live with dignity and freedom, to get an education and pursue opportunity, to love our families and love and worship our God, to live in the kind of peace that makes life worth living.

It is the nature of our imperfect world that we are forced to learn these lessons over and over again. Conflict and repression will endure so long as some people refuse to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Yet that is precisely why we have built institutions like this — to bind our fates together, to help us recognize ourselves in each other — because those who came before us believed that peace is preferable to war, and freedom is preferable to suppression, and prosperity is preferable to poverty. That is the message that comes not from capitals, but from citizens, from our people.

When the cornerstone of this very building was put in place, President Truman came here to New York and said, "The United Nations is essentially an expression of the moral nature of man's aspirations" — the moral nature of man's aspirations. As we live in a world that is changing at a breathtaking pace, that is a lesson that we must never forget.

Peace is hard, but we know that it is possible. So, together, let us be resolved to see that it is defined by our hopes and not by our fears. Together, let us make peace — but a peace, most importantly, that will last.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Amir of the State of Qatar.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to address the General Assembly of the United Nations this year, at a time when its President is a son of the State of Qatar, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his election and to wish him every success in his mission. I would also like to express my thanks to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his hard work during his presidency of the previous session. Let me also congratulate His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon for the trust that all Member States expressed in him by reappointing him as Secretary-General of the United Nations for a second term.

I come to the Assembly from a region brimming with great expectations and hopes that is navigating through strong currents, a region whose peoples are calling for reform so that they can achieve their goals, assume their responsibilities and take their place in the partnership of the future of humankind, with all of its challenges and prospects.

We have been aware of our role from the very beginning and we have acted within its parameters. We are for the promotion of dialogue among cultures and civilizations. We are for strengthening and consolidating relations among peoples. We are for the consolidation of rapprochement among Powers on the basis of the principles of right and justice and within the framework of rightful cooperation. That cooperation must be governed by the principles, laws and

international charters and covenants that have been developed by humankind over the centuries to ensure a better future for the world.

All members of the Assembly are aware that the blossoming of the Arab Spring — with all that it represents in Arab and human history — has presented everyone with heavy responsibilities that they have to assume, as well as positions that they have to take. We were among those who made a choice. On the one hand, we have always had a clear policy with regard to the rules that govern our Arab, regional and international relations. Those rules are based on understanding, reconciliation and harmony among peoples and nations. On the other hand, like others, we have been unable to turn a deaf ear or a blind eye to the calls of the wounded seeking help from near and far against an entrenched oppression and injustice.

For our part, we exhausted each and every means, until the only option left for us was to hear and sympathize, and to watch and help. We knew that this was not a solution, but rather an emergency situation in the context of one of the most critical issues in the Arab world today, by which I mean the issue of change.

We know that our principled choices are stable and strong. We also know that our subsequent response to the prevailing situation stems from urgency, and that it is a situation that needs to be settled on the basis of the rules and laws that govern international relations in the contemporary world. It is a situation that should shift responsibilities from States acting individually to an international community acting in accordance with its rules and laws.

We have already expressed our views here, during previous sessions of the Assembly, that the United Nations system needs to evolve in a manner consistent with the situations that reflect the realities of a new world. That world is not one linked with interests alone, but one where it is imperative to have an agreement that confirms the principles that govern civilized behaviour, while simultaneously preserving the unity of those interests.

The major problems in the Middle East region are the question of Palestine and the continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories in the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Shaba'a farmlands in southern Lebanon, in addition to the threat of war and the strangulating Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip.

For over four decades, all peace efforts that have been deployed have resulted in failures to reach a just settlement that would ensure a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. This is because of Israel's intransigent position, which seems to be that its military might enable it to guarantee peace and security, and its insistence to play for time and to use the negotiations to preserve the status quo by continuing Jewish settlement.

Faced with this stalemate in the Palestinian cause, the continued suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation and persistent violations of their human and national rights, we urge all Member States of the United Nations to listen to the voice of right. We urge them to respond to the Palestinians' legitimate request for a Palestinian State that will become a full-fledged member of the United Nations, on an equal footing with all other Member States. This will pave the way for the realization of peace in our region.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, for the statement he has just made. I also wish to thank His Highness very much for his warm compliments. I hope that I will live up to his expectations and be worthy of his trust.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Calderón Hinojosa (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to participate in this session of the General Assembly. We have heard extremely significant speeches, which have, deservedly, captured

the attention of the Assembly. However, as I speak in this lofty forum of the international community, I would like to lay out Mexico's views, a country that, as one of the founding States of the United Nations, has actively contributed to ensuring that the Organization once again plays its role in promoting peace, justice, security, equity and sustainable development among nations.

The world faces major challenges, about which we have spoken today. We have talked about terrorism, war, peace, climate change and poverty. We know that we are afflicted by other problems, such as the global economic crisis. I would like to refer to just a few of them now, as I am aware that our duty is to strengthen the United Nations, to make it less bureaucratic and to once again turn this into an Organization that is able to tackle the pressing challenges of our time. Faced with this reality, Mexico is shouldering its international responsibilities firmly and with determination.

I would now like to refer to the problem that I think today most afflicts the poorest people in the world. More than 1 billion people, on every continent, are living on less than $1.25 a day. This is the problem of poverty. Over the past five years, the price of food has risen by more than 50 per cent. Over the past 12 months, the average increase has been 26 per cent. This means that the poorest families, who allocate most of their income to food, have sunk even deeper into poverty.

This is why poverty has increased around the world. This is why we once again see famine in the Horn of Africa, in various nations on that continent, in Asia and in Latin America. This is why, in addition to the democratic awakening of certain nations, we have seen many people suffering from hunger who have taken to the streets. Hunger is what has, in many cases, awakened their awareness of democracy.

Why the hike in food prices? That is the first question we must ask ourselves. It is partly because developing countries have grown rapidly, and that is a good thing. China, India and many others have reached growth rates that allow their people to have greater access to food. What is left to do is to develop the necessary technology to increase our capacity to produce food.

Secondly, drought and climate change have been other contributing factors. We have not truly realized that climate change is a serious threat to humankind as a whole. In particular, climate change is behind the drought that has restricted food production in recent years.

Thirdly, there is financial speculation and speculation on the financial markets. Let me point to one bit of data. In 1987, financial agents and companies bought just 7 per cent of food on the world markets. Today, more than 30 per cent of sales of corn and wheat in the world are made by financial companies. Why do they want corn and wheat? Is it to trade them on various markets or to distribute them to certain regions? Of course not. Trade companies and distributors buy 70 per cent of wheat and corn, but the remaining 30 per cent is bought by financial firms with one specific purpose in mind, namely, speculation. We see how they buy and sell the rights to food with the sole intent of driving up market prices, when thousands of children are dying of hunger across the various continents.

I am someone who believes in markets, economic freedom and enterprise. But I also know that the time has come for restrictions to be imposed on unbridled markets, which are also behind world hunger.

The second challenge that I would like to refer to is drug trafficking and international organized crime. Everyone is surprised by the dozens, hundreds and even thousands of deaths caused by repressive authoritarian regimes, and of course, we also repudiate these. However, we also have to be aware that organized crime today is killing more people — and more young people — than all of the current dictatorial regimes put together. Today, thousands of people — tens of thousands of people in Latin America, in particular between Mexico and the Andes — are dying because of criminals. I greet with affection and respect my colleagues from Central and Latin America who are here today.

Today, the world faces the challenge of unscrupulous criminals who have no respect for borders and who do grave harm to the citizens of many nations. The power of crime is stronger than many Governments, although assuredly not ours. This stems from two fundamental factors, namely, the exorbitant profits that flow from drug trafficking and unlimited access to the purchase of powerful weapons.

With respect to weapons, why do criminals have unrestricted access to AK-47s, R-15s and grenade launchers? In my view, having fiercely fought

criminals and having seized 120,000 weapons in five years, the answer can be summed up in a single word, profits — the runaway profits of an arms industry that sees in every war, whether a civil war in some distant country or a battle among criminals, an opportunity to sell ever more weapons.

It is urgent for us to put in place serious controls in countries that produce and sell high-power weaponry, so as to prevent them from filling the arsenals of organized crime. The United Nations has its work cut out for it in that regard. The United Nations must continue to promote the draft international arms trade treaty and to prevent weapons from being diverted towards activities that are banned by international law.

Moreover, organized crime feeds off the astronomical profits produced by the illegal sale of drugs around the world. Unfortunately, the demand for drugs in those markets continues to increase. We must recognize that so long as there are drug consumers prepared to pay tens of billions of dollars to maintain their addictions or preferences, that market will remain the primary financial support for criminal activity.

Mexico is doing its part to energetically fight crime in all its manifestations. Today more than ever, however, drug-consuming countries must undertake effective efforts to radically reduce demand. It may be argued that this is impossible and that the demand for drugs is continuing to rise, as is the case here in the United States, where nearly 30 per cent of young people use drugs, and in other parts of the world.

What is the solution? I can honestly say that even if those countries are unable or unwilling to reduce their demand for drugs, or if they are resigned to the fact that it will continue to rise, they still have a moral obligation to reduce the huge profits that drug traffickers obtain from that black market.

It would be best to reduce demand, but failing that, reduce profits. Drug-consuming nations have the obligation to find a way to cut that source of endless economic gain, and to seek every possible solution, including alternative markets that would prevent drug trafficking from being the source of violence and death, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean and various African countries.

The third challenge to which I would like to refer is climate change. Along with Mexico, my Central American and Caribbean colleagues are experiencing ever more violent hurricanes that destroy the homes of the poor and cut short many lives. Ironically, just a few weeks ago, one of those tropical hurricanes that was headed for our Caribbean coast landed instead on the streets of Manhattan. There are still some who are surprised that there are hurricanes in New York, unprecedented droughts in Texas and never before seen floods in Pakistan or Mexico or Colombia or Guatemala. Even with all this, they still do not accept the fact of global warming.

I can proudly state that we have made progress and that Mexico has done its part in moving towards a solution to this problem. We organized the sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Cancún, where important agreements were reached. For example, for the first time, nations agreed within the framework of a binding United Nations instrument to establish a global limit on the rise in temperature of our planet of no more than 2° centigrade by the end of this century.

We also agreed to establish the Green Fund, to support developing countries in their mitigation and adaptation efforts.

In addition, we created a mechanism for technology transfer that incorporates methods for reducing emissions caused by deforestation and soil degradation, which will allow the poorest countries to contribute to reducing global warming by preserving their forests and jungles. In Mexico, more than 12 million people in indigenous communities, who make their living from jungles and forests and who have had no choice but to destroy them, today use their woodlands in a sustainable way and are paid by the rest of society for the environmental service that their trees provide.

With the approach of the seventeenth Conference of the Parties, in Durban, we fear that without sufficient political leadership and commitment to its own Convention by the United Nations, we may lose part of what we have achieved in the battle against climate change. We must advance within the Kyoto Protocol, keeping in mind that the provisions of annex I expire next year. What will happen with our environmental obligations in the light of the failure of the most relevant nations to take action?

The best way to fight climate change is to break with the false argument that we must choose between economic growth and combating climate change. They are in fact perfectly compatible. Through actions that build sustainable development, we can simultaneously reduce poverty and climate change.

Finally, another challenge is the social basis for reducing poverty and marginalization. In Mexico we established a programme for transferring money to the poorest of our population, with incentives for mothers who take their children to school or health clinics. The programme offers an average of $80 monthly to the bottom fourth of Mexico's poorest families, benefiting more than 30 million people and reducing extreme poverty in our country by nearly 50 per cent between 1995 and 2010.

Recently, we have focused on guaranteeing the health of all Mexicans. In five years, we have added 2,000 new hospitals and clinics, reconstructed 2,000 more and introduced a national health policy that already covers more than 100,000 people. This allows Mexico to proudly state today in the United Nations that this year we will achieve universal health insurance, covering doctors, medicines, treatment and hospitalization for any Mexican who needs them. That achievement, of which we are proud, confirms the fact that Mexico has already achieved almost all the Millennium Development Goals to which it committed itself.

Finally, I should now like to discuss a crucial issue that has to do with the transformation and modernization of the United Nations. The conflict in the Middle East is a matter that has clearly tested the capacity of the Organization. We are particularly concerned about the stalemate in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. The United Nations bears the responsibility for making a constructive contribution to the peaceful resolution of this conflict — one that makes possible the existence of two States, reaffirms the recognition of Israel's right to exist and makes the establishment of a Palestinian State a reality. Of course, we must bear in mind that this must be a genuine, viable and negotiated solution in which legitimate and balanced mediation plays a fundamental role. Such a solution must also be politically and economically viable and enable Israel and Palestine to truly exist side by side in peace, so that new generations of Israelis and Palestinians can truly know what it is to live together without hatred or violence.

We should also remember that no solution can be found while either of the sides, explicitly or implicitly, desires the annihilation of the other. In addition, we must make progress on compliance with United Nations resolutions in order to put an end to policies that we all know are contrary to international law.

It is also vital that we move forward together in transforming and modernizing the Organization. It is an excellent thing that the United Nations building is being renovated; now we need to modernize the Organization at its core. It must not fail in its commitment to history and humankind. It is time that all Member States play our parts in ensuring that the Organization has the strength and viability that it needs, and that it lacks. There have been many occasions, for instance, when the United Nations has been paralysed by the tyranny of consensus, where a minority is able to defeat a large majority. Consensus must no longer be seen as the veto power of the obstinate; rather it should be understood as the possibility of building shared and genuinely legitimate solutions that reflect the will of the majority.

Keeping the United Nations relevant also necessarily implies the reform of the Security Council, whose rules of participation have not been revised in more than 40 years. Mexico seeks a total reform that improves representation for all Council members while at the same time preserving the Council's capacity to take action and promoting its members' accountability. We cannot allow the chief supranational body to become a decision-making centre for the few.

Mexico reaffirms its confidence in the United Nations as a forum that represents the diversity and plurality of human beings. Mexico also reiterates that it will continue to be a strategic ally of the Organization in the struggle for peace, the war against hunger and the struggle for security and the progress of all peoples of the world.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Mexican States for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nazarbayev (*spoke in Russian*): I would like, on behalf of the Republic of Kazakhstan and on my own behalf, to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his re-election to his high and responsible office. I should also like to congratulate the Ambassador of Qatar, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. The Republic of Kazakhstan also congratulates the newest Member of the community of nations, the Republic of South Sudan, on gaining its independence.

This year, our country celebrates the twentieth anniversary of its independence. During this entire time, Kazakhstan has faithfully complied with the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter. First, we closed the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, the largest in the world, thereby becoming one of the world's first new non-nuclear States. This represents an enormous contribution on the part of my country to global peace and stability.

Secondly, we succeeded in convening the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), which I proposed 19 years ago in this forum. Today it includes participants from 29 countries, representing nearly half the world's population. Last year, Kazakhstan became the first country from the Commonwealth of Independent States to chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), injecting new energy into every area of its work. We also succeeded in holding an OSCE summit in our capital, Astana, the first in 11 years. The adoption of the Astana Declaration has helped to strengthen the OSCE and its efforts to create a cooperative and indivisible security community across the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. Kazakhstan has also called for the establishment of a single platform for cooperative Eurasian security by combining the capabilities of the OSCE and CICA over the long term.

This year, Kazakhstan assumed an important duty, the chairmanship of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). We have focused our chairmanship's efforts on strengthening international and regional security; continuing dialogue between the Islamic world and the West; combating Islamophobia; and enhancing programmes promoting the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The most recent test for the OIC was the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. In that regard, we succeeded in raising $350 million for programmes designed to deliver food, medical supplies and economic restoration to Somalia.

Thirdly, 140 ethnic groups and 40 religious denominations live in our society in peace and harmony. Astana regularly hosts congresses of leaders of world and traditional religions. We have offered to hold such forums under the auspices of the United Nations, and they have stabilized the region. That represents our contribution to the global dialogue on confidence-building in the world.

Fourthly, our country has demonstrated a commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, we have been able to move to the forefront in terms of the pace of reform and economic growth. In the past two decades, we have posted a 14-fold increase in per capita gross domestic product, from about $700 to about $10,000.

Fifthly, Kazakhstan has called for the adoption of a global energy and environment strategy and has put forward an ambitious "green bridge" environmental initiative. We plan to bring these ideas to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro next year.

The world is entering one of the most critical periods in its history. Humanity has harnessed powerful sources of energy but is powerless against the forces of nature. Enclaves of poverty and destitution are emerging, even in the wealthiest and better-off countries. It is becoming harder and harder to contain outbreaks involving ethnic and religious intolerance, even in societies with well-established traditions of tolerance.

In today's inclusive information age, there are no reliable means of protection against electronic extremism. Ten years ago, the whole world came together in the face of the terrible tragedy of 9/11. Yet no conclusive lessons have been learned from it, and the resurgence of international terrorism is evident in various parts of the world. These are the main challenges of the new century.

In that context, I would like to draw the attention of participants in this political discussion to the following.

First, we have to address issues related to global nuclear safety and security. We call for the start of the drafting of a universal declaration on a nuclear-weapon-free world. We have high hopes for the Nuclear Security Summit, scheduled to be held in Seoul in 2012. It is necessary to expand the legal framework for, and increase international control by the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency, compliance by all countries with their obligations in the area of non-proliferation.

We welcome the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. We consider it important that all States that make up the Nuclear Club join that process.

Today the world faces a paradoxical situation: some are allowed to possess and upgrade nuclear weapons, while others are strictly forbidden to be engaged even in research and development. This is unjust, disproportionate and unfair. The relevant provisions of international law must thus be reviewed. The idea is to strengthen the responsibility of all States, especially nuclear-weapon States, to reduce nuclear weapons and gradually destroy their stockpiles.

Today there are no clear legal assurances to non-nuclear States by nuclear-weapon Powers. In this important dimension, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons does not work. At this stage, nuclear weapons are not a deterrent but a catalyst of an arms race.

In the twenty-first century, general curbs on the arms race can be effectively provided only by a collegial body with broad powers such as the Security Council. I also propose that we issue a collective appeal on the part of the international community to de facto nuclear-weapon States to renounce their ambitions and to accede to comprehensive treaties.

Secondly, the increasing globalization of economic processes requires a paradigm shift in the economic component of the work of the United Nations. The raison d'être of global mechanisms for currency, trade and economic regulation should be the forecasting of global crises and the elimination of their causes.

It is generally agreed today that the current global crisis was caused by deficiencies in the global financial system. However, to date no significant steps to address its flaws have been taken. Procrastination in tackling this issue will result in new and violent manifestations of the crisis and a surge of regional and global instability.

It is important to establish an effective global economic governance mechanism, with clear powers and lines of accountability involving all institutions and actors, an effective global reserve currency and tight control over speculative capital. In this context, a pact on global regulation would seem quite relevant.

The prevention of global hunger and the growing scarcity of water are other important issues.

Thirdly, information space is a sphere that is as important to the future of humanity as mineral resources, air, the aquatic world and outer space. Yet today not a single international convention or multilateral treaty governs information processes. Is that not the reason why, in practical terms, most hacker attacks on banks, businesses, Government institutions, the military and even nuclear facilities have been able to be carried out with impunity?

I consider it important to establish an international legal framework for global information space. The resolution on nine elements of a global culture of cybersecurity (*resolution 57/239*), adopted by the General Assembly in 2002, could serve as a basis for such efforts.

Fourthly, the new world order is taking shape against the backdrop of increasing conflicts. It is quite significant that today the world's total military spending is growing twice as fast as it did during the cold war — by 6 per cent a year, reaching $1.5 trillion. In this regard, my initiative to establish a United Nations peacekeeping fund, which I put forward for the first time 19 years ago, has become even more

relevant. This would involve each State Member of the United Nations allotting 1 per cent of its military budget for that purpose. I urge the international community to consider this idea once again and take the required action.

Sixty-six years ago, the United Nations was founded as an organization based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members. However, one cannot but notice how today the principle of national sovereignty and territorial integrity is being eroded. That could undermine trust between nations. Today it is essential to upgrade the norms of international law concerning the national sovereignty of States and, taking into account new realities, clearly define the bounds beyond which the involvement of the international community in the settlement of internal conflicts is warranted.

Global peace will be enhanced only if the United Nations works more closely with regional security arrangements. With respect to the Eurasian region, these are the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. It is important to ensure that the composition and the work of the Security Council adequately reflect the structure of the modern world. At the same time, the veto mechanism will guarantee that the decisions that are adopted are balanced and effective.

Kazakhstan has announced its candidacy for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for 2017-2018. We count on the support of the international community in this respect.

The complex question of Palestine has been actively discussed these days. Kazakhstan supports the creation of a Palestinian State. A difficult issue, however, has been placed on the scales of history; President Obama spoke about this. For the long-suffering Palestinian people, like the Israeli people, the negotiating process has been ongoing for more than 50 years. Without independence and their own State, the Palestinians will not be able to achieve sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Each new era in the history of humanity gives rise to formidable challenges. Today, the most important task is to successfully navigate the complex global transformations of the twenty-first century. Trust and unity among all nations will be a pillar of an equitable new world order.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sarkozy (*spoke in French*): When we met in this very place in September last year, who among us could have imagined that in barely one year the world, already shaken by an unprecedented economic crisis, would undergo such change? Within a few months, the Arab Spring gave rise to immense hope.

The Arab peoples, too long crushed by oppression, were able to raise their heads and claimed the right to be free at last. They fought back against the violence and brutality with their bare hands. To those who proclaimed that the Arab Muslim world was by nature hostile to democracy and human rights, the young Arabs produced the most cogent denial.

We do not have the right to disappoint the hope of the Arab peoples. We do not have the right to destroy their dreams. For shattering the dreams of those peoples would vindicate the fanatics who have not stopped pitting Islam against the West by stirring up hatred and violence everywhere.

That appeal for justice shook the world, and the world cannot respond to that call for justice by perpetuating an injustice. That miraculous spring of the

Arab peoples imposes on us the moral and political obligation at last to find a solution to the Middle East conflict. We cannot wait any longer. The method used to date — I weigh my words carefully — has failed. So we must change the method.

We must stop believing that a single country — whether the largest or a small group of countries — can resolve so complex a problem. Too many large actors have been sidelined for our efforts to succeed. I mean that no one can believe that the peace process can succeed without Europe, without all the permanent members of the Security Council and without the Arab States that have already chosen peace. A collective approach has become indispensable in order to create trust and to provide guarantees to each of the parties.

Peace will indeed be made by the Israelis and the Palestinians, and by no one else. No one can expect to impose it on them. But we must help them.

The method no longer works. Let us together acknowledge that setting preconditions for negotiation is to condemn ourselves to failure. Preconditions are the opposite of negotiation. If we wish to enter into negotiation, which is the only possible path for peace, there must be no preconditions.

Let us change the method. All the elements of a solution are known — the Madrid Conference of 1991, President Obama's speech of 19 May, the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the parameters agreed by the European Union. So, let us stop endlessly discussing the parameters and allow negotiation to begin in line with a concrete and ambitious timetable. Sixty years without one centimetre's progress — does that not compel us to change the method and time frame to one month to resume discussions, six months to reach agreement on borders and security, and one year to reach a definitive settlement?

As of this autumn, France proposes hosting a donor conference so that the Palestinians can complete the construction of their future State. France wishes to say that we must not immediately seek the perfect solution, because there are no perfect solutions. Let us choose the path of compromise, which is neither renunciation nor repudiation, but which allows us to move forward, step by step.

Thus, for 60 years the Palestinians have been waiting for their State. Has the time not come to give them hope? For 60 years, Israel has suffered from not being able to live in peace. For 60 years, the question of the peaceful coexistence of the two peoples — Palestinian and Israeli — has continued to fester. We can no longer wait to take the path of peace. Let us put ourselves in the place of the Palestinians. Is it not legitimate that they claim their State? Of course it is. And who does not see that creating a democratic, viable and peaceful Palestinian State would be, for Israel, the best guarantee of its security?

Let us put ourselves in the place of the Israelis. Is it not legitimate that, after 60 years of war and attacks, they demand guarantees of that peace, so long awaited? Of course it is. I say that forcefully. If anyone anywhere in the world were to threaten the existence of Israel, France would immediately and wholeheartedly stand alongside Israel. Threats made against a State Member of the United Nations are unacceptable, and they will not be accepted.

Today, we are facing a very difficult choice. Each of us knows — and let us stop with hypocrisy and one-off diplomacy — that full recognition of the status of a State Member of the United Nations cannot be attained at once. The first reason for that is the lack of trust between the main parties. But let us tell the truth: who can doubt that a veto in the Security Council will engender a cycle of violence in the Middle East? Who can doubt that?

Must we therefore exclude an intermediate stage? Why not envisage offering Palestine the status of United Nations Observer State? That would be an important step forward. After 60 years of immobility, which has paved the way for extremists, we would be giving hope to the Palestinians by making progress towards final status.

To show their determined commitment to a negotiated peace, the Palestinian authorities should, as part of that approach, reaffirm Israel's right to exist and to its security. They should commit to avoiding using this new status to resort to actions that are incompatible with the pursuit of negotiations.

We have but one alternative — immobility and negotiations that go nowhere or an intermediate solution that would give hope to the Palestinians with the status of an Observer State.

In parallel, Israel must observe the same restraint. It must abstain from any actions that would prejudge the final status.

The ultimate goal must be mutual recognition of two nation-States for two peoples established on the basis of the 1967 lines with agreed and equivalent exchanges of land.

The General Assembly, which has a power to do so, should decide to move ahead, leave behind the fatal trap of paralysis, missed appointments and short-lived attempts to relaunch the process. Let us change our approach. Let us change our state of mind. Each should try to understand the reasoning, sufferings and fears of the other. Each must open its eyes and be ready to make concessions.

In conclusion, I would like to say to the Palestinian people with the deep and sincere friendship I hold for them: "Think of the Israeli mothers grieving for their family members killed in terrorist attacks. They feel the same pain as the Palestinian mothers confronted with the brutal death of one of theirs".

I would like to say to the Israeli people with the deep and sincere friendship I hold for them: "Listen to what the young people of the Arab Spring are saying: 'Long live freedom!' They are not crying 'Down with Israel'. You cannot remain immobile when this wind of freedom and democracy is blowing in your region".

I say with deep and sincere friendship for these two peoples who have suffered so much that the time has come to build peace for the children of Palestine and for the children of Israel. But it would be a great shame if the General Assembly did not seize the opportunity of the reawakening of the Arab peoples to democracy to settle a problem that brings unhappiness to these two peoples, who are in any event condemned to live alongside each other. If we take a compromise solution, we will rebuild trust and we will give people hope.

I say that with the utmost gravity to the representatives of all nations. We must assume an historic responsibility. It is the General Assembly of the United Nations that must keep this appointment with History.

Let us reassure Israel and give hope to the Palestinian people. The solution is on the table. Let us take this compromise solution over deadlock. Deadlock might satisfy everyone here, but it will create violence, bitterness and opposition that will imperil the resurgence of the Arab peoples. To that, France says that the tragedy must cease for a simple reason: it has gone on for too long.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Fernández (*spoke in Spanish*): Exactly eight years ago, in this same context and from this same rostrum, the President of my country, Néstor Carlos Kirchner, addressed the Assembly, four years after having assumed the presidency of the Argentine Republic with only 22 per cent of the vote. Given the situation of the Argentine Republic — which had fallen into default in 2001, where about a quarter of the population was unemployed and levels of destitution and poverty had exceeded 50 per cent — he stated that the multilateral credit institutions needed reform, particularly the International Monetary Fund, as did the political bodies of this honourable Organization.

President Kirchner made five speeches to the General Assembly, and I have made four. This is my fourth statement as President of the Republic. In each of our addresses we have made the same calls to a world that has changed significantly since 2003, when the Argentine Republic was cast as a black sheep gone astray and which found itself in default because of a continued failure to fulfil its obligations. In reality, we were victims, used as guinea pigs in the experiments of the 1990s and neoliberal policies.

Much has happened since then, when Argentina defaulted on the largest debt — at least, so far — in the history of humanity, $160 billion. Over the past eight years, Argentina has restructured its debt, reducing it from 160 per cent to less than 30 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The rates of poverty and indigence have been reduced to single digits, and we must continue that fight. Our unemployment rate is among the lowest, and we have completed the most significant cycle of economic growth in our 200 years of history.

Among the emerging countries of our region, Latin America, Argentina has had the leading growth rate and is regularly paying its debt without turning to capital markets. I am not going to list all of the numbers, but they are very compelling. In 2003, we spent 2 per cent of GDP on education and 5 per cent on debt payments. Today, Argentina devotes 6.47 per cent of its GDP to education and spends 2 per cent to debt payment.

The situation in the world is quite different. Many regions and countries have severe problems. Argentina does not pretend to be a model or an example for anyone, but we do wish to reaffirm the need to formulate clear rules with regard to the transfer of capital in the area of financial speculation. Many speakers before me, and doubtless many more to come will do the same, have complained about financial commodity speculation, especially in the food sector.

When we compare the growth of global financial stocks to global GDP — what all of the citizens and businesses of the world produce in goods and services — it becomes clear why we are facing a world where speculation is out of control, careening from one side to the other and from one country or region to another, affecting currencies, economies and the daily lives of citizens, destroying jobs and preventing people from obtaining a dignified education and health care.

If we look at the relationship between global GDP and financial stocks in the 1980s, we see that it was a one-to-one relationship. There was a financial stock that was exactly equal to the goods and services being produced by the world. From the 1990s, figures skyrocketed. In 2008 total financial stocks, total financial activity in the world, reached 3.6 times the global GDP. This meant a tremendous gap between what we produce and what is in what I call the "enter key" economy. I call it that because, if we go looking for these shares, they are mere keystrokes transferring numbers from one place to another, from one currency to another, producing unparalleled market volatility and recurrent crises whereby exchanges go up and down on a daily basis. This not only destroys thousands of jobs but also generates immense profits that someone is pocketing.

We would like to reiterate once again, in the light of our own experience — and I reiterate once again that I do not want to set up a model — the need for multilateral credit organizations to work extremely hard on regulating the global movement of capital and financial speculation. If this does not happen, it will be impossible to achieve that ever elusive market stability, and as a result, the economies of both emerging countries, which have been sustaining the growth of the global economic activity, and developed countries alike will be overwhelmed.

It is crucial that this message be understood, because today we may see speculation on food; yesterday, it was on oil, and tomorrow, it could be on little candies, if that would be profitable and beneficial to the moving of this capital, which gets transferred from one side of the world to the other without any control or regulation whatsoever.

Here I must say that, as a member of the Group of 20 at the London meeting — when it was decided to inject an enormous amount of financial resources into the financial sector that was experiencing problems — I maintained that it was necessary to guarantee that those resources being injected into the financial world could later return to the real economy, the concrete economy, to be able to generate employment, products and services.

Unfortunately, we continue to find ourselves in the same situation, because other than the changes that I would describe as purely cosmetic, we have gone no further with the necessary regulation.

Moreover, the credit ratings agencies — which bear a great deal of the responsibility for much of what has happened — rate Argentina, for example, as a marginal economy. Until very recently, they categorized economies on the brink of default higher than that of Argentina. Therefore, transparent regulation of the ratings agencies is needed, as they bear a great responsibility for the crisis we are currently seeing in various regions — which will, of course, have an impact on all countries.

It is regrettable that we have been asking for the reform, reorganization and modification of the multilateral credit bodies for so long now. Indeed, we believe that this task should already have been begun, already formulated, in order to avoid precisely what we are experiencing now. For some people it is just a matter of numbers on the stock market, but for others they signal the destruction of the hopes of a lifetime.

As I was saying to a colleague the other day during a visit to Europe, economic crises always end up impacting the political system. There cannot be a serious economic crisis, in which millions of people fall into poverty and lose their jobs, homes, education and health, without that also signalling profound political transformation. And when such political transformation results in further serious economic crises, the result is experiences that I will not go into now. Totalitarianism often came out of crises. The twentieth century produced crises that were not adequately solved by political means.

I call once again for the reform of this important Organization, which represents multilateralism — something we have always consistently defended. We need a more pluralistic and diverse world, and to make political bodies such as the United Nations, and crucially the Security Council, more democratic.

We do not agree on the need to expand the number of permanent members; on the contrary, we believe that the permanent member category should be eliminated. The right to veto also should be eliminated, as it really prevents the Security Council from carrying out the true functions that it had in the bipolar world in which it was originally conceived. At that time, the right to veto was necessary, because in that bipolar world, with the fear of a nuclear holocaust, that right gave to Council members the balance necessary to ensure the security of humankind. Today, that balance is broken. Permanent seats and the right to veto are not about defending security or universal stability; rather, they are often about the position of Council members exercising their right.

In my most recent statement before the Assembly (see A/65/PV.14), I believe I concluded by expressing my hope that this year Palestine would be become the 194th Member of the concert of the United Nations. My country, Argentina, like most South American nations, has recognized the State of Palestine.

I sincerely believe that blocking the entry of Palestine could perhaps be seen by some as benefiting the State of Israel. But allow me to say to Assembly members, on the authority we have as a country that has suffered from the scourge of international terrorism, that to prevent Palestine from becoming a member of this Assembly means to continue providing alibis to those who engage in international terrorism and who in that repudiation find precisely one of the false arguments they use to justify their crimes.

I believe that the non-inclusion of Palestine this year, far from providing greater security and stability in the world, will bring about greater insecurity and conditions that are utterly unfavourable to what should be the prestige of a body that should represent the interests of all citizens of the world.

For that reason, I ask that God will enlighten those who must make this historic and structural decision of global significance so that greater balance can be achieved and so that this year Palestine will be able to take its seat number 194. I am sure that if we succeed in that endeavour we will help to create a world that is not only safer, but more just.

I would like to make another point, one linked to the situation that we have been describing, with regard to what is shown by the injustice of certain countries — five, to be exact — on the Security Council having veto rights. Once again, we have come to the heart of the United Nations to raise an issue that is just as vital, and not only to Argentines.

The question of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands is also a trial by fire for this body in terms of whether it is possible for it to comply with a policy that is essentially multilateral and under which all members are obliged to accept the resolutions of this Assembly.

Ten General Assembly resolutions have invited the United Kingdom and my country to sit down to negotiate and discuss our sovereignty. Bear in mind that Argentina is not asking for those resolutions to be implemented in terms of recognizing sovereignty. No, it is simply asking for compliance with some of the provisions of the 10 United Nations resolutions on the matter.

Perhaps we could also list the 29 resolutions of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee and the 11 resolutions and 8 declarations of the Organization of American States, as well as the

resolutions of various forums — Ibero-American forums, the Union of South American Nations, the Common Market of the South, meetings of the Arab and African countries — and the entire world. Through such resolutions and declarations, all of them have been demanding that this issue be addressed. The United Kingdom has systematically refused to do so and has obviously used its status as a veto-wielding member of the Security Council to that end.

The year 2013 will mark the passage of 180 years since the Argentines were expelled by force of arms from our Malvinas Islands. Next year will mark 30 years since an incident — which the United Kingdom took advantage of — that was committed by the most terrible dictatorship in memory, of which we Argentines were ourselves victims.

I am proud to be the Government that has set an example for the world in terms of human rights and the prosecution of those responsible for committing crimes and acts of genocide. That is why I believe that focusing on that incident is nothing other than one of the many excuses given to justify non-compliance with United Nations resolutions. What is worse, I ask all of those who see themselves in the mirror of a future world in which natural resources will be necessary, to see how our natural resources, our fisheries and our petroleum resources, are being stolen and illegally seized by those who have no right to do so. Obviously, I do not feel it necessary to emphasize the fact that no one can lay claim to an overseas territory that is more than 14,000 kilometres away. That is clearly an illegal occupation.

Once again, we call upon the United Kingdom to comply with the resolutions of the United Nations. Recently, there have been genuine provocations, including missile tests in May and July, which were denounced before the International Maritime Organization, which also suffered one of those attacks. Once again, I reiterate to this Assembly and to the United Kingdom Argentina's interest in dialogue. It is true that much time has passed, however. We state here, before this Assembly, that we will wait for a reasonable period of time, but if nothing transpires, we will be forced to begin reviewing the provisional understandings that are still in effect. We emphasize in particular that the question of sovereignty must be included in those understandings.

Members may ask what I am referring to here. It is the joint statement and exchange of letters of 14 July 1999 on resuming a regular weekly LAN Chile flight between Punta Arenas and the Malvinas Islands with two monthly stopovers, one in each direction, in Rio Gallegos.

Argentina has no intention of exacerbating the situation for any party, but it is also fair that this Assembly and the United Kingdom be aware that there must be compliance with the resolutions. We cannot wait 180 years, or 30 years, just as Palestine cannot be making pilgrimages over the decades to find a place in the world. Still less can the Argentines wait to reclaim the territory that legitimately belongs to us.

I cannot conclude without referring to an issue that has been mentioned in all of the statements that President Kirchner and I have delivered here since 2003. A few moments ago, when I spoke of the question of Palestine, my authority to do so — if indeed it gives us authority, as such — is derived from the fact that we are one of the only two countries in the Americas that have been the target of international terrorism.

This happened on two occasions. In 1992, there was the explosion at the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, and in 1994, there was the blast at the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA), which is one of the most important mutual associations in Argentina. I stress not that it is a Jewish association, but that it is an Argentine association. This was an attack on Argentina.

I am demanding, on the basis of the requirements of Argentine justice, that the Islamic Republic of Iran submit to the legal authority and in particular allow for those who have been accused of some level of participation in the AMIA attack to be brought to justice.

Last year, we proposed here that if they did not trust our country's justice system, we could take the approach that was taken for the Lockerbie case: we could choose a court from a third country, by mutual agreement, in order for that court to be able to provide the only thing that we are demanding — that is, justice. We insist on this because it is a universal demand. It does not have to do with political positions. This word, justice, is in the Talmud, the Bible and the Koran, and, for those who do not believe in anything, I am sure it is in their country's constitution.

The Government of Argentina received, on 16 July, a message from the Foreign Ministry of Iran stating that it intended to cooperate in initiating a constructive dialogue with Argentina in order to help us get at the truth with respect to the brutal attack against the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association of 18 July 1994. The message that we received from Iran, although signifying a change of attitude on the part of the Government, does not satisfy our demands, which, as I said quite clearly, are for justice.

However, it is an offer of dialogue that Argentina cannot and must not reject. We are here calling for dialogue with the United Kingdom and dialogue among all the parties that make up this body. My country does this on the basis of its commitment to fulfilling its obligation to resolve controversies through peaceful means. This attitude has characterized our country throughout our history. This means that in one sense, Argentina must put aside the requirements arising from our national justice system with respect to prosecuting the presumed perpetrators of these attacks. In another sense, we cannot do this, as this is up to judges and public prosecutors.

What we would like to say, however, is that we think that this dialogue must be constructive. It must be a sincere dialogue and must achieve results in order to be credible and therefore not be understood as just a delay tactic or a distraction.

I will conclude my statement. Sometimes, I think of everything that has happened to Argentines. These things have happened to many countries at various times, but they have all happened to us, in our country, during our history. We have had the worst economic and social disaster in living memory. We still have today a Power exercising a colonial influence in our country. International terrorism has twice made us the target of its attacks. So, if we think of it, it is as if all of the problems and all of the tragedies and miseries of this world decided to focus on one single country.

Our capacity to recover, in terms of the economy, our tireless and never-ending fight to recover what is ours, our never-ending demand for justice for the victims of the attacks, and the strength that we have drawn from all of these tragedies give me the confidence and certainty that this is the path we have chosen: that of achieving growth along with social inclusion for our fellow citizens. It is the path of ensuring that there is unlimited respect for human rights, with trials carried out for the sake of remembrance, truth and justice. It is the path that ensures that today, as the President of all Argentines, I can be accompanied here by family members of victims of the AMIA attack. They have confidence that the Government will continue to do what it has always done, which is to defend the values of truth and justice.

That is what gives me great hope that God will shed light on the path of all those who have to make decisions, not with a view to elections but with a view to the destiny of the world in upcoming decades. That is why I would like to greet everyone today who has taken the floor or who will take the floor and thank the entire Assembly for the support that they have each given, in all of these causes, to my country, the Argentine Republic.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sleiman (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, especially since you represent a brotherly country that has constantly shown solidarity with Lebanon and has played a key role in advancing agreement and mutual understanding in the Doha Agreement and in Lebanon's reconstruction. I do this hoping that our deliberations will contribute to

shedding light on rightful causes and buttressing the logic of justice.

This year's General Assembly is held in a context dominated by major Arab developments and the rightful Palestinian endeavour for the State of Palestine to be recognized and to obtain full membership in the United Nations. In addition, there are other issues such as the persistent tensions on the Korean peninsula, natural disasters that threaten different parts of the world and the persistence of the phenomenon of terrorism as we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the 11 September attacks, which we strongly condemn.

I stand before the General Assembly today as the representative of a country that since its inception has carried the message of freedom, concord and moderation. Lebanon strives to consecrate and consolidate that message, in spite of the challenges and threats, both in the East and the West, to models of coexistence and cultural diversity. In accordance with its Constitution, Lebanon is "a parliamentary democratic republic based on respect for civil liberties, especially the freedom of opinion and belief". Moreover, "[t]he people are the source of authority and sovereignty; they shall exercise these powers through the constitutional institutions".

Indeed, Lebanon has committed itself to those principles, to the devolution of power and to the participation of all religious communities in the management of public affairs, in spite of the wars and aggression it has suffered over decades. Moreover, Lebanon has always been committed to respecting legitimate international decisions and resolutions, including those of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, as the ministerial statements of the successive Lebanese Cabinets have asserted.

Over the past months, the Arab region has witnessed events and mass popular movements calling for freedom, democracy and the establishment of the rule of law, rejecting authoritarianism, favouritism and corruption. Lebanese intellectuals, members of the media and activists have championed and laboured for every movement of reawakening in the Levant, to make the region a beacon of revitalization. Along with them, Lebanon welcomes any peaceful approach or means to achieve reform, to consecrate the principles of democracy, justice and modernity and to preserve human dignity and fundamental freedoms.

Only through those principles and systems can security and peace for all segments of our societies be achieved and an environment conducive to sound human development be ensured. We must respond to the recent upwellings and changes in the Arab world in such a way that they serve its common good, foster its progress and dignity and prevent it from veering towards extremism, chaos, fragmentation and religious or sectarian division.

At the same time, it must be brought to the attention of the international community that the wave of popular protest that has arisen in some Arab countries cannot be perceived as stemming simply from demands to improve living conditions. Therefore, allocating funds to support economic and social development in Arab countries undergoing transition is not by itself sufficient to promote democracy, moderation and openness. Indeed, means should be explored to dispel feelings of injustice and oppression rankling in the hearts of Arab peoples, who have been marginalized for decades, their development and growth impeded by Israeli practices and threats, on one hand, and by their exclusion from the tide of modernity and globalization, on the other.

Any such approaches require serious, determined efforts — within the framework of an integrated process — to impose a just and comprehensive solution to all aspects of the conflict in the Middle East, based on international resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative in all its provisions. That would lay the foundation for a broader dialogue and understanding between the East and the West and among civilizations, cultures and religions. Such an understanding is historically overdue, after decades marked by feelings of injustice and hostility, destructive wars and missed opportunities.

In that connection, it is important to underscore the right and just Palestinian effort to earn full recognition of the State of Palestine and for its full membership in the United Nations, in accordance with the right to self-determination. Lebanon will work for the success of those efforts, with the coordination and cooperation of brotherly and friendly countries. However, recognition of the Palestinian State and its accession to the United Nations, though greatly important, would neither restore full rights to the Palestinians nor represent a final solution to the Palestinian question.

Until a final and just political solution to the question of Palestine is reached — one guaranteeing the Palestinian refugees' right of return — the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remains responsible for the relief of Palestinian refugees, in cooperation with the host countries. Along with our Palestinian brothers, Lebanon rejects any form of permanent settlement of those refugees. For that reason the UNRWA budget must be constantly maintained. The Agency must not be merged with other United Nations bodies, which would weaken its capacity.

In another context, Lebanon has recognized the Libyan National Transitional Council, and it expects Libyan officials, with whom it is communicating for this purpose, to uncover the fate of Imam Musa al-Sadr and his two companions, who were made to disappear in Libya during an official visit in 1978.

A few days ago, Lebanon hosted the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which concluded with the 2011 Beirut Declaration. That was a defining moment in the implementation of the Convention. Humanitarian considerations are at the heart of international concern about cluster munitions. The Meeting highlighted the terrible human fallout of those weapons, which were used heavily by Israel during its aggression of July 2006. To this day, those weapons threaten civilians on their farmlands and innocent children at play in open fields in South Lebanon.

Israel should be condemned for its use of those weapons, and appropriate compensation should be demanded for the extensive property damage and harm to people it has caused Lebanon with those weapons. Israel should compensate as well for the overall damage caused by its repeated aggression against Lebanon, including damage caused by the oil slick that resulted from the Israeli bombardment of the Jiyeh Power Station in the summer of 2006.

On the fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), Lebanon reiterates its commitment to persevere in implementing that resolution. Lebanon calls once again on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to abide by all its provisions. Those provisions require Israel to halt its daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty and to withdraw immediately from Lebanese territories that it still occupies in the northern part of Al-Ghajar village, the Shaba'a farms and the hills of Kfar Shouba. Furthermore, Israel must cease its persistent threats against Lebanon and its infrastructure and its endeavours to destabilize the country through its spying networks and recruitment of agents. Meanwhile, we maintain our right to liberate or retrieve all of our occupied territories through all legitimate available means.

On the other hand, we emphasize that we strongly uphold our full sovereign and economic rights over our territorial waters and exclusive economic zone and our freedom to exploit our natural resources, be they on land or in the deep sea, free from any designs or threats.

We have addressed to the Secretary-General an extensive correspondence setting out the boundaries of our territorial waters and the legitimacy of our territorial rights. Specifically, we laid out the geographic coordinates of the southern and south-western borders of Lebanon's exclusive economic zone. We raised particular objections to Israeli violations and aggression that violate those rights. Furthermore, as we warned against any initiative to exploit the resources of the disputed maritime zones, we asked the Secretary-General to take all measures he deems appropriate to avoid any conflict.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the crucial role in south Lebanon of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) carried out in coordination and full cooperation with the Lebanese Army. I would also like to commend the dedication of UNIFIL commanders and staff in carrying out the mission they have been entrusted with, as well as the immense sacrifices they have made in the service of peace.

While we thank those countries that have contributed military personnel and material for their continued commitment, in spite of the challenges they have encountered, we also firmly condemn the terrorist attacks in recent months on international forces, particularly the French and Italian battalions. We are working earnestly to pursue the perpetrators and bring them to justice and to prevent any recurrence of such incidents.

The United Nations has played an ever-growing role in maintaining international peace and security and in intervening to resolve disputes in many troubled regions of the world. So far, however, it has been

unable to show effectiveness in the Middle East, where grave dangers still threaten international peace and security as a result of Israel's ongoing defiance of resolutions of international legitimacy; its unacceptable rejection of the basic conditions required for peace; and its persistence in conducting abusive practices in Gaza and the occupied territories, such as the illegal construction of settlements and violations of human rights.

This demands that negotiations on reform of the Security Council come to fruition, so that the Council can be brought more into line with the new geopolitical situation and be capable of ensuring the implementation of its binding resolutions.

In conclusion, as we celebrate the centenary of International Women's Day this year, we must take greater advantage of the potential and talents of half of humankind, rather than merely seeking to enshrine gender equality in principle. Women are making an enormous contribution to raising and educating the younger generation, promoting peace, reducing poverty, hunger, disease and environmental degradation, and promoting sustainable development opportunities.

Mr. Ramgoolam (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The general debate in the Assembly is an occasion for all of us to renew the vows we made in 1945 in order to address the challenges and crises facing us — by working through institutions of international legitimacy and agreed collective solutions, in conformity with the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations, its resolutions and the provisions of international law, provided that they are based on the spirit of justice and avoid double standards. History has taught us that this choice is the one and only reasonable solution.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Lee Myung-bak, President of the Republic of Korea

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lee Myung-bak, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Lee Myung-bak, President of the Republic of Korea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lee Myung-bak (*spoke in Korean; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to begin by extending my sincere congratulations to Ambassador Al-Nasser on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I have every confidence that under his able leadership this session will be guided to a fruitful conclusion.

May I also take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations, with unanimous support from Member States, and to thank him for the great commitment and devotion he has shown over the past five years to achieving the vision of a responsible United Nations. I have no doubt that in his second term he will make an even greater contribution to creating a stronger United Nations for a better world.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Republic of Korea's membership in the United Nations. It would be no exaggeration to say that the Republic of Korea came into the world with the United Nations and grew up along with the Organization. It was under United Nations auspices that the democratic Government of the Republic of Korea was established in 1948. Through a General Assembly resolution (195 (III)), the Government of the Republic of Korea gained international recognition as the only lawful Government on the Korean peninsula. When the Korean War broke out two years later, United Nations forces played a decisive role in defending the country. In the aftermath of the war and during the years of national reconstruction, the United Nations provided us with generous economic assistance and the concept of

universal human rights, thus promoting progress on both the economic and democratic fronts.

In spite of such special historic ties between the United Nations and the Republic of Korea, it was only with the end of the Cold War, in 1991, more than 40 years later, that the Republic of Korea was admitted to the United Nations. For the past 20 years, the Republic of Korea has made every effort to realize the causes and values of the United Nations. We have played an active role in various areas of international cooperation, including the global fight against poverty, sustainable development, the promotion of human rights and democracy, and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Republic of Korea began its journey as one of the poorest countries in the world, engulfed in war and poverty, and has managed to achieve remarkable success on both the economic and democratic fronts. It may therefore be rightly said that the Republic of Korea is an exemplary international success story, fully embracing and reflecting the values espoused by the United Nations, be they those relating to democracy, human rights or development.

Now the Republic of Korea wishes to give back to the international community even more than it has received. We stand ready to extend a helping hand to those in need, providing them with appropriate support and care. We are keen to cooperate closely with the United Nations and to play a constructive role in combating the various challenges facing the international community.

Maintaining international peace and security is the fundamental responsibility of the United Nations. For the past 60 years, the United Nations has made every effort to prevent war and armed conflict in the international arena. Furthermore, it has provided varied and creative means for maintaining sustainable peace in dangerous parts of the world, from preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping to post-conflict peacebuilding. The most striking example may be in the advancement of United Nations peacekeeping operations. There has been an increase in demand for United Nations peacekeeping operations since the end of the Cold War. As a result, not only has there been an increase in the number of personnel, but the work of the operations has also become more diverse and multifaceted, extending beyond the monitoring of ceasefires to assisting in nation-building.

Peacekeeping operations offer great hope for millions of those who suffer in the midst of war and natural disasters. The Republic of Korea is proud to participate in 10 United Nations peacekeeping missions, including those in Haiti and Lebanon.

Today, while still struggling with conventional security threats, the international community faces new types of security threats, such as the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and the threat of terrorism. The international community must strengthen its non-proliferation regime in order to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and long-range missiles.

Furthermore, the threat of transnational terrorism has emerged as a serious security issue that requires concerted effort from the international community, in particular since the attacks of 9/11. The Republic of Korea stands firmly against, and condemns all forms and manifestations of, terrorism. Terrorism, a vicious means to achieve political objectives by taking innocent civilian lives, cannot be justified under any circumstances. The international community must reaffirm its determination to eradicate terrorism and step up its collective counter-terrorism efforts.

The greatest threat of all, perhaps, emanates from nuclear terrorism. International cooperation is now needed more than ever to prevent it. Following the first Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., last year, the second such summit will be held in Seoul in March 2012. The Republic of Korea is making every effort to ensure that the Summit will constitute a valuable opportunity for the international community to build a more solid system of international cooperation, which is necessary to prevent nuclear terrorism.

This year, the international community has witnessed a wave of dramatic changes sweeping across North Africa and the Middle East. The democratic movement that began in Tunisia, which then swiftly spread to Egypt and Libya, has proved that democracy is a universal value of humankind that transcends region and culture. At this very moment, the people of Syria and Yemen are taking great risks to hold aloft the torch of freedom and democracy.

Democracy is a vehicle that unites the basic values of humankind, such as freedom and equality, human rights and the rule of law. The people's demand for democracy is their legitimate right. The

international community and the United Nations must do all they can to protect these people from persecution and human rights abuses.

United Nations efforts have played a great role in the recent democratic progress in Africa. The United Nations facilitated the birth of the Republic of South Sudan through peaceful referendum, and played a crucial role in the progress of democracy in Côte d'Ivoire by realizing the transfer of power.

Nevertheless, as history has only too clearly shown, building democracy is no easy task. It is important that fledgling economies in many parts of the world become sustainable and robust. Above all, it is essential that these nations form stable Governments through elections and achieve economic development. The United Nations must be there for them.

Democracy constitutes a foundation for sustainable national development. For the Republic of Korea, economic growth and democratization have been achieved in a mutually reinforcing manner.

In the twenty-first century, in this age of globalization and communication revolution, the tide of democratization is unstoppable regardless of a nation's economic standing.

I believe that a vibrant economy will push forward economic growth in all corners of the world. To assist developing nations pursue both democracy and economic growth is indeed the role of the United Nations.

The market economy and democracy have enabled humankind to fulfil the desire for a better life, along with the values of freedom and individual happiness. However, the growing gap between rich and poor, which unfortunately accompanies today's highly developed market economy, calls for self-reflection vis-à-vis the capitalist system and greater public responsibility.

The growing gap between developed and developing countries should not only be addressed as a poverty issue, but should also be understood as a potential destabilizing element to international peace. Furthermore, this inequality stands against the global vision of achieving common prosperity for all humankind.

It is only when members of the international community share each other's burden and work together in a mutually complementary manner towards a common goal that the eco-systemic development of the world can be achieved. Developed nations must help developing countries to maximize their capacity so that they can achieve economic growth and development on their own. To that end, it is important to foster a global atmosphere that is conducive to supporting the development of trade, investment, finance and human resources in developing countries.

International aid must focus on, and provide support to, areas that form the basis of economic development in developing countries, such as infrastructure and trade-related capacity building. At the same time, efforts must be made to strengthen the role of multilateral organizations, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in development assistance. Such efforts should be grounded in the sincere belief that the growth of developing countries will provide a valuable growth engine for all, including developed countries, by expanding global demand as a whole.

Through the global financial crisis in 2008, we have come to realize once again that we live in a highly interconnected world. A financial crisis that started in one place became global in an instant. No country was spared from the bitter sting of economic crisis. In the face of the crisis, the Group of Twenty (G-20), a mechanism that brings together both developed and developing nations, was created.

The Seoul Development Consensus for Shared Growth, which was adopted last year at the G-20 Seoul Summit, and the G-20 multi-year action plan outline specific measures to realize growth that embraces developing countries as partners. As a member of the G-20, the Republic of Korea will faithfully and actively implement those measures.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), championed by the United Nations, constitute another important agenda that pursues shared growth between developed and developing nations. The Government of the Republic of Korea will be an active participant in international development cooperation as pursued by the MDGs. We will faithfully implement our plan to double our current level of official development assistance by 2015 and, drawing wisdom from our past experience, will assist developing countries in ways to build capacity to achieve genuine growth on their own.

I hope that the fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to be held in Busan in November this year will provide a valuable opportunity to set a new global cooperation paradigm and partnership to effectively address new changes and challenges in international development cooperation.

The cost of reckless economic growth that ignores environmental warnings will be beyond imagination. The rise in the Earth's temperature due to greenhouse gas emissions has caused abnormal climatic phenomena. Ecosystem damage due to the greenhouse effect is causing enormous economic damage in various parts of the world.

To protect our environment and promote growth at the same time, we must use less fossil fuel and more renewable energy, while promoting the safer use of nuclear energy. Green technology devoted to meeting these goals will create more jobs for people and will enable us to attain sustainable economic growth in decades to come.

Having designated "green growth" as a national growth paradigm in 2008, the Republic of Korea has been actively pursuing this goal. The Republic of Korea was the first country in the world to introduce the Framework Act on Low Carbon, Green Growth. We are also investing 2 per cent of our national gross development product in green sectors every year.

Another important development was the launch of the Global Green Growth Institute, which was founded by the Republic of Korea along with like-minded countries. The aim of the Institute is to share cutting-edge green technology and experience with developing countries. In so doing, developing countries will be able to join in the global green growth movement and attain economic growth and environmental protection together as one global community.

The United Nations shall have a more important role than ever to play in restoring the equilibrium in the global ecosystem and promoting shared growth in the international community. In this regard, I welcome the inclusion of "Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication" as a main theme of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. I look forward to the Conference producing a solid vision and action plan towards economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development.

The North Korean nuclear threat poses significant challenges to peace on the Korean peninsula, North-East Asia and beyond. Over the past 20 years, the Republic of Korea has made consistent diplomatic efforts, in cooperation with the international community, to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and will continue to do so.

In the twenty-first century, we must first work together if we wish to attain peace and prosperity. This is a historical trend in which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must take part. It is my hope to see the Democratic People's Republic of Korea enjoy peace and prosperity by becoming a responsible member of the international community. When the Democratic People's Republic of Korea chooses the path to mutual benefit and common prosperity, we will be ready to assist in that endeavour along with the international community. I sincerely hope that this will transform the Korean peninsula from a place of conflict and strife into a bedrock of peace in North-East Asia and the world.

Today, humankind faces a range of unprecedented transnational challenges that require closer international cooperation than ever before. At this historic moment, the United Nations will have a greater responsibility and role to play.

Over the 60 years since the establishment of the United Nations, the dynamics of international relations have been fundamentally and structurally transformed. To meet the new demands of the times and address the diverse challenges of the future, the United Nations should constantly strive to renew and reinvent itself. In particular, the Security Council should be reformed to become more democratic and accountable in order to fulfil its mandate of maintaining international peace and security. The Republic of Korea has been actively participating in discussions on Security Council reform. We will continue to contribute constructively to those discussions in the future.

With the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations always in our hearts, the Republic of Korea will continue to actively cooperate with the Organization to create a greater United Nations in times of change.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Korea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lee Myung-bak, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): I participate in this debate of the General Assembly in our dual position as President in Office of the African Union and President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. I do so in the full conviction that the passage of years and the experience accumulated in the 66 years of the life of this world Organization will inspire the international community morally and united in social and political solidarity around universal norms and principles in order to address any threat or situation that may affect the planet.

Mr. Boolell (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

With this conviction in mind, I should like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar, on his recent election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. He represents an ancient culture that has contributed much to the development of humankind, and hails from a peaceful country that demonstrates solidarity and contributes to the maintenance of peace, stability and development in the world. We are certain, that under his leadership, the United Nations will be able to solve the serious problems affecting our countries.

We would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his re-election to the helm of this world Organization, in recognition of the work that he has done over the past five years despite the various political, economic and social crises that our planet has faced and is continuing to face.

On the basis of that conviction, the United Nations, given the current trend whereby it is being converted into a club for the powerful, must reconfigure itself so that it can resume its place as the most representative and equitable organization in the world — one in which those whose problems it is endeavouring to resolve can participate and have their voices heard. That would ensure the democratization of all of the organs of this universal institution.

With respect to peace and security, Africa, which is witnessing various fratricidal conflicts caused, in most cases, by internal and external factors and by third parties, has firmly stated that it is in favour of the peaceful resolution of conflicts, wherever they may be taking place, through dialogue, mediation and negotiation.

Africa, a continent whose countries and peoples have been exploited for centuries by foreign Powers, today is experiencing a new iteration of neocolonialism, involving the intervention of forces on the basis of humanitarian principles and democratic freedoms. In this connection, Africa must bring to the fore its international political personality so that the African Union is respected, moving beyond internal differences caused by unspoken interests.

Intervention by force, internal or external, has never provided a lasting solution to conflicts since the creation of the United Nations, as has been seen in the various conflicts that have taken place in the past 50 years. Unfortunately, we can see that the United Nations is being used dishonestly, under the pretext of humanitarian interventions, when in fact those interventions have served only to further violate the human rights of the peoples affected. The use of force in a conflict is not a unifying factor but rather one of division and destruction.

The African Union recognizes the victory of the National Transitional Council of Libya in its fight against totalitarianism and recommends that its Government undertake a programme of transition aimed at the holding of free and transparent elections, ensuring their legitimacy through the participation of all of the groups that constitute the community of Libyan people.

With regard to the situation in Tunisia and Egypt, we also call on their Governments to adopt the legal and administrative structures necessary for democratic processes and State institutions.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the State of South Sudan on its accession to membership of the United Nations and to express our wish that the peoples of the Sudan and of South Sudan will live in peace and harmony with all of their neighbours and with the international community.

Today's world is suffering from an economic and financial crisis whose consequences are unpredictable. It is the result of the irrationality of the current political, economic and social world order, which has moved away from the social and humanitarian principles of equality, justice and fairness.

In the political realm, we cannot transplant the cultural values of a country or a group of countries to others simply because the world, and policies themselves, are becoming increasingly globalized. Rather, we must promote dialogue and coexistence among cultures and civilizations, because, if we do not do so, the principle of the self-determination of peoples will automatically disappear.

It is true that democracy is a noble principle and applies to any cultural value that is practiced and accepted by peoples. To say otherwise would be to betray the spirit of democracy that must develop in consonance with the cultures of respective peoples.

On the economic front, the social dimension of peoples must manifest in the form of productive activities that benefit humankind. In that context, we cannot see any justification for the barriers, blockages and discrimination that we see in current economic, scientific and technical exchanges among nations, which only perpetuates the impoverishment of some and the ever-increasing enrichment of others.

Indeed, the level of participation of the African continent in world markets is ridiculous, not even topping 1 per cent despite its economic and human potential, which studies have described as representing the future salvation of humankind. Africa calls on the developed countries to show solidarity and help us to develop our economy so as to become an integral part of this planet.

Africa is not asking for a handout. Africa requires a level of economic and technological support that would enable it to process its vast resources, which, while contributing to accelerating its development, would also have an effect on the economic stability of its partners. All of this requires profound changes in the way in which we think about the current system and a readjustment of the methods and procedures used in international economic trade.

The social order is determined by the political and economic order, but the political cannot develop properly unless the economic does as well. In that respect, Africa is making great efforts to develop its national democracies, and many African States have adapted their political, legal and administrative structures to the basic requirements of democracy.

Nevertheless, in order to translate theory into practice, certain basic requirements must be met that meet the material needs of humankind. Thus many countries failed in this respect. Instead of their plans coming to fruition, they became engulfed in fratricidal conflicts because they did not meet such basic needs.

Moreover, the African continent is facing, in addition to the economic crisis, the devastating effects of climate change, natural disasters, drought, famine and communicable diseases, which claim millions of victims. In that respect, the African Union recently organized a donors conference to support victims in the Horn of Africa, with Somalia being one of the countries most affected. The African Union has honoured its commitment to tackle this emergency. However, the helping hand of the international community is still needed.

We believe that developed countries whose industries are responsible for atmospheric warming should meet their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and compensate developing countries for the damage and harm resulting from the effects of atmospheric warming.

The groups at greatest disadvantage in this crisis are women, children and young people. However, young people without physical, intellectual and moral development cannot take up the mantle from the current generation to ensure the future of nations. Hence there is a need to provide the necessary moral and material assistance to young people to ensure the development of the continent in the future.

In that regard, the African Union Summit held in Sipopo, Equatorial Guinea, adopted a programme for

promoting the employment of women and young people and the fight against underemployment, as well as to provide professional and academic training. This programme needs the support of the international community.

In my own country, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, we are committed to the Millennium Development Goals set for 2015. During the national economic conference held in 2009 to plan for the rational use of our oil resources and others, the Government adopted a national economic development programme, with the aim of ensuring that Equatorial Guinea joins the ranks of emerging economies by 2020.

In parallel to this programme, the Government is carrying out political, legal and administrative reforms in order to optimize the development of democracy and ensure control, transparency, good economic and political management and guarantee maximum respect for human rights.

The political environment in my country is optimal for promoting peace, stability and reconciliation among all political forces, who work together in harmony with a unified set of consensual political criteria.

Finally, Equatorial Guinea is participating in these discussions with a good measure of optimism, based on our belief that, contrary to the selfishness that prevents many States from joining their efforts to tackle the problems facing our world, what we are seeing every day is a growing awareness and international moral determination that the United Nations should be a veritable centre for the unity and cohesion of the international community.

Indeed, while Africa was isolated in the past, today the groups of countries who trust in Africa, its States and the contribution they can make to the global development continue to grow. We wish the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly every success.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Head of State of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President and Head of State of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, Head of State of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the Head of State of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, Head of State of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, Head of State of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Abdullah: It is an honour to return once again to this historic setting. May I warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. Jordanians well remember his distinguished tenure as Qatar's Ambassador to Jordan. I also express my warm congratulations to the Secretary-General on his election to a second term.

This year, in my region and everywhere in the world, leaders are being asked to listen and to act; to solve today's serious global crises in the economy, the environment, and peace; to uphold the equal dignity of all persons and, as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations, the equal rights of our nations; to create more inclusive political and economic life, especially including young people; and to prove that global justice, by peaceful process of law, is more than words: it is achievable, and achievable now.

The challenge has come to my region, and historic transformations are under way. This year, we have witnessed vast changes, both orderly transitions and tumultuous events with a high price in bloodshed and loss. But those of us who have welcomed and championed reform are hopeful. We believe that the Arab Spring can be an opportunity to institutionalize positive change — change that is necessary for a strong, secure and prosperous future. We can build on the pioneering achievements of Arab-Islamic civilization, with its core values of compassion, responsibility, tolerance and respect for others.

For my country, these opportunities are opening the door to a major revitalization of our reform effort. We want it to be an inclusive, national effort that can

reach our goal of parliamentary Government. The irreversible democratic change we seek means more than establishing new structures. It means embedding a way of life: the active responsibility of participating in political parties; creating political, economic and social platforms; and working with others to realize the future our people need. It also means building reform right into reform, including the rule of law, justice and the rights and freedoms of democratic political life.

Early on, Jordan began a review of the cornerstone of our political life, the Constitution. Parliament is currently putting the final touches on amendments for ratification by both chambers. Among these key provisions are an independent constitutional court and an independent elections commission.

We in Jordan are also working with our partners to address another global danger, namely, the immense negative impact of regional conflict. The central — the single greatest driver of division and instability — is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

We are today at a dangerous impasse. The opportunities of a year ago to move talks forward to a clear-cut endgame failed to gain momentum. Negotiations have come to a halt. Frustrations are at a peak. Even as we speak, Israeli settlement activity is ongoing, despite every ruling of international law and in the face of strong international protest.

We are seeing settlement activity in Jerusalem, although that is one of the key final status issues that can only be resolved through negotiations. It is a global concern. In my great-grandfather's words, a sacred chain binds Muslims around the world to that holy city. I cannot overstate the crisis that would arise from harm to the holy sites of any faith or from efforts to annihilate the Arab character of East Jerusalem.

A two-State solution that ends the conflict by meeting the needs of both sides is, and can be, the only secure and lasting peace. A solution comprised of two States — a sovereign, independent and viable Palestine and Israel, accepted and secure — is the core of all major international proposals, including the Arab Peace Initiative.

All are agreed that negotiations must go forward, and soon, resolving the final status of all four key issues — borders, Jerusalem, refugees and settlements. Only then will the conflict cease to be a flashpoint for global violence, and people on both sides will be able to get on with their future in peace.

President Obama recognized that strategic imperative when he set the parameters for a solution on 19 May. The Arabs viewed these parameters positively. Israel built settlements. The Quartet, the European Union, President Sarkozy and other representatives of the international community have put workable ideas on the table. The Arab States welcomed them. Israel built settlements. That is where we find ourselves today.

We cannot teach the next generation respect for law and mutual acceptance if they see law and compromise repeatedly fail. Yet we must uphold the law, or civilization falls. We cannot teach the value of peaceful process if peaceful process repeatedly fails. Yet we must uphold peaceful process, or humankind is lost.

In this impasse, Jordan and the Arab States are holding fast to our principles of peace and law. We have come here — to the house of nations — to seek the justice of nations.

We will continue to strongly support the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to Statehood, in fulfilment of their aspirations, in accordance with United Nations resolutions and within a comprehensive and just settlement, including the resolution of all final status issues. It is their right to seek it here, in the home of nations, the United Nations. That we must all support.

We seek a new and vigorous international push, with concrete steps toward the endgame. We seek not words, not process, but a decisive end to conflict and a new beginning in peace — the peace that comes from real Statehood. We seek recognized rights for Palestinians — the rights that allow people to look forward in dignity and hope. We seek a peace that brings real security for Israelis — who will put aside their fortress mentality and achieve acceptance in their neighbourhood and the world.

Men and women everywhere share basic concerns — a better life for themselves and their families, security to plan for the future, a say in how society is organized and rights they can depend on. For too many, these hopes have been unanswered. But a new era is beginning in my region, with new

opportunities to move forward in democracy, security and peace.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, Head of State of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Ms. Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Halonen: Let me start by congratulating both the President and the Secretary-General on their elections.

We live in an era of integration and interconnection. No country can solve all the challenges it faces on its own. Every country should be part of the solution. Common responses are needed more than ever. Accordingly, the importance of the United Nations has grown.

The United Nations, or as I like to call it — the G-193 — has been a success story. The guiding principles of the United Nations Charter — peace and security, human rights and development — have served us well for decades.

The Millennium Development Goals are more recent examples of the global reach of the United Nations. These Goals have inspired Governments to introduce measures that are saving lives every single day.

The United Nations has also been at the forefront of support for the empowerment of women. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women gives women and girls an even stronger and more unified voice. I have truly enjoyed hearing so many speakers today underlining that important trend.

Globalization has contributed to substantial economic growth. However, fruits of that growth have not been equally distributed between and within nations. That is wrong, and it is not sustainable. It is our duty to provide a sustainable future for our planet and its people. Sustainability, in brief, is about a resilient planet that supports the needs of all people worldwide.

We, the world community, have accomplished a lot since we adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and the Millennium Development Goals 11 years ago. Both of them have proved to be effective tools in the eradication of extreme poverty.

But the work must continue with enhanced determination. We must respect the interdependence of the three dimensions of sustainable development — the social, economic and ecological. If even one of these dimensions is neglected, development cannot be sustainable.

Recent events in Northern Africa and the Middle East have once again emphasized that development, human rights and peace and security are interlinked. Everyone must be able to enjoy civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

I am pleased to chair the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability together with President Zuma of South Africa. We will deliver our recommendations towards the end of this year. The goal of the Panel is to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality, make growth inclusive, and production and consumption more sustainable, while combating climate change and respecting the range of other planetary boundaries. We are fully convinced that the eradication of poverty and sustainable development are interlinked and can be reached together. It is really one fight.

The Panel is building bridges between economy, ecology and social justice. The empowerment of women and youth is vital for our goal. It is necessary to put into use all human resources for the development of our societies.

We have not only discussed setting the goals but also how to reach them. I believe that expanding

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into sustainable development goals around the year 2015 could help the world community to continue its fight against poverty and enhance sustainable development.

In today's world, there are far too many conflicts. As they often take place within countries, they are especially dangerous for civilians. These asymmetrical conflicts usually arise from injustice, violations of human rights and discrimination against minorities.

The President has chosen a very important theme for the general debate, namely mediation. The peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and mediation are at the very heart of the United Nations. Mediation has to be used at every stage of conflict. We need to enhance the capabilities of the United Nations in this field. Training and guidance are pivotal. Women's participation and grass-roots activities and the work of non-governmental organizations are also vital for our efforts if we want to win.

On the initiative of Finland and Turkey, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on mediation in June of this year (resolution 65/283). As has been mentioned today, this is the very first resolution on this theme in the history of the United Nations. The resolution aims at strengthening the role of the United Nations in mediation. I would like to thank the Member States for their excellent support to this process. Let us continue our common efforts also during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We are ready for that.

Peace processes need to be more inclusive. I wish to stress the importance of the full and effective participation of women in all stages of peace processes. The record is far from impressive at the moment, as the number of women around the negotiation tables continues to be strikingly low. I welcome the efforts by UN-Women to change the situation, and I call upon us all to make a commitment to involve more women in this work.

Finland, my own country, is a strong supporter of the United Nations, in word and deed. We contribute more than our share to peacekeeping, to development aid and to the promotion of human rights around the world. Finland wishes to continue to carry its responsibilities, with the Assembly's support, in the Security Council for the term 2013-2014. Our commitment, our capacity to serve on the Council and our record speak for us.

Finland warmly welcomes the Republic of South Sudan as the 193rd Member State of the United Nations. The implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement has been a testimony to the importance of mediation and regional leadership. I commend the efforts of President Mbeki and his Panel to find solutions to outstanding issues between the Sudan and South Sudan.

The dramatic and rapidly evolving situation in the Arab world has been at the centre of the attention of the international community. Women and men have marched together for a better future. It is important that they continue to participate side by side in also building a democratic society. Democracy cannot be achieved without full participation of women too.

As we welcome the new Libya into the world community, Finland commends the National Transitional Council for underlining the need to continue building a sense of national unity, reconciliation and an inclusive political system with respect for equal civil rights and freedom of expression. Finland gives its full support to the transition, reflecting the aspirations of Libyan people. We are ready to support the building of democratic society based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the fulfilment of the human rights of women. The United Nations should play a central role in coordinating the international community's contribution. We very much welcome the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

Reaching a solution to the Middle East conflict is more pressing than ever. The Palestinians have a right to their own State, Palestine. The international community gathered here in the General Assembly must show that it is united in its message to the parties. We need the urgent resumption of negotiations that will lead, within an agreed on time frame, to a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security. There is no time to waste.

I have had an opportunity to lead Finland's delegation to the General Assembly since 1995. We have witnessed a remarkable widening of our common global agenda. Today's decisions will affect not only us but also future generations. Change is necessary for the survival of humankind. I am confident that the United

Nations is the sole universal forum to respond to the challenges that the world is facing.

I wish those gathered here all the best for the future.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): During the past year we have witnessed events and popular uprisings that are changing the face of the planet, both politically and economically. As President of a country that firmly believes in multilateralism, I come to the General Assembly today to emphasize how important it is for the United Nations to assume the fundamental role that belongs to it in the face of such crises. Crises in and of themselves are neither good nor bad; their results depend on how we manage them. They can often become genuine opportunities.

The political transformations we are seeing in North Africa and in the Middle East, for example, if they lead to a strengthening of democracy and the rule of law in the affected countries, can be a factor in global stability. What the peoples request, what the peoples seek, is freedom, respect for their rights, the ability to choose their leaders and democracy. The duty of the international community is to support them. If we do not, if we turn our back on them, we may see a protracted period of civil wars and conflict, which we should avoid at all cost.

Therefore, we must commit ourselves to strengthening and applying the methods of peaceful conflict resolution described in Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter. The more efficient we are in the use of preventive diplomacy, the less need there will be for intervention.

We should advocate effective mediation with conviction, mediation that does not seek the leading role but one that is given the time and tools required to establish trust and to reach solutions that are advantageous to all parties.

I am pleased to be able to affirm today that Colombia does not just believe in mediation and peaceful solutions; we have successfully put them into practice. My Government succeeded in normalizing relations with two countries: Venezuela and Ecuador. We did this on the basis of conciliation and respectful, direct dialogue.

The former President of Argentina, Mr. Néstor Kirchner, then Secretary General of the Union of South American Nations, lent his good offices to the rapprochement between Venezuela and Colombia. His management was extremely effective, a great legacy he left to our region.

In Latin America we have learned that Governments and States may have differing, even at times opposing, political concepts, but that this does not mean they cannot live together and cooperate in peace. We have also made important contributions to the search for dialogue, negotiation and mediation in our region. Honduras is an example of that effort. Venezuela and Colombia joined forces to support the Honduran parties in their reconciliation through dialogue and rebuilding trust. This succeeded in bringing Honduras back into the Union of South American Nations.

What I have said so far can also be applied to long-standing conflicts, such as that between Israel and Palestine. Advances can be achieved if, and only if, direct dialogue and effective mediation are employed. Along with the rest of the international community, we are concerned by the suspension of peace negotiations, and we urge — in fact, we implore — both parties to return to the negotiating table as soon as possible. That is the only — I repeat, the only — path that leads to what we all wish to see: two States living in peace and security.

On a positive note, we can offer as an example of appropriate cooperation and negotiation the efforts that led to the creation of the Republic of South Sudan, the most recent Member of the United Nations, to which we give the most effusive welcome.

As a current member of the Security Council, Colombia has brought to the agenda the situation of Haiti, a country struck by natural phenomena and affected by unacceptable poverty. The solution there must remain a priority for all of us. Peace in Haiti will be the fruit not just of peacekeeping operations, but of the empowerment of Haitians themselves in handling their own problems and solutions, with sufficient international support for their economic and social development.

By virtue of its place as the country with the greatest biodiversity per square kilometre in the world, which makes it highly vulnerable, Colombia is committed to measures that mitigate the effects of climate change and enable us to adapt to them.

We are participating in the preparations for the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, which will take place in July 2012, with a proposal we have been developing in consultation with other countries. We believe that one of the main results of Rio+20 should be the establishment of a set of sustainable development goals based on the agenda that was approved in the first conference and echoing the Millennium Development Goals.

The guiding principles were established in Rio in 1992, and an implementation plan was agreed on in Johannesburg in 2002. Today, 20 years later, we need to define a set of goals that allow us to measure achievements, identify shortcomings and determine the opportunities for advancement. The planet and its future demand that we work with goals, with specific indicators of results that ensure the efficacy of our efforts.

A year ago I said that thanks to advances in economic and social security, Colombia was at the threshold of a new dawn. Today I can state with realism and well-founded optimism that the first rays of that new dawn are beginning to warm us and light our way.

My Government is one of national unity, in which the main political parties have converged around the fundamental objectives of the nation. This unity has afforded us a significant measure of governability and has enabled us to have historic laws and reforms approved in our Congress that will help us to have a more prosperous and safer nation, one that is more equitable and more egalitarian.

Among the initiatives that have been approved, I wish to point to a law concerning victims and the return of land that guarantees that the State and society work to make reparations and to return stolen lands to hundreds of thousands of farmers affected by the violence of the past several decades. We are paying a moral debt to the victims. This is the first time in the history of the world that this is happening before the end of an internal armed conflict. We have decided that justice, truth and reparations must not have to wait.

It is worth pointing out that Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon joined us in Bogotá the day that law was passed. He emphasized the advance it represented and offered the assistance of the United Nations in ensuring its proper application.

Also thanks to the governability guaranteed by our new national unity, we were able to establish a more equitable distribution of resources originating from oil and mining to ensure that they reach our neediest population and regions.

In addition, at this time of global financial and economic volatility, we have introduced into our Constitution the element of fiscal sustainability, and have enacted a law to ensure that the State maintains discipline in its management of public finances. Such responsible initiatives have increased investor confidence, had a positive impact on our country's risk rating and will lead to a more stable economic future in which we believe we will be able to focus on reducing unemployment and poverty, my Government's two main priorities.

Colombia, to a degree unlike any other country in the world, has had to deal with the global drug problem. We have had much success, but a great many challenges remain. We know how terrorists benefit from drug-trafficking, and there can be no doubt that drugs and terrorism threaten democracies and the rule of law. Colombia will continue to combat these scourges, because for us they represent a national security problem. We are actively cooperating in the region, and will continue to do so, to combat transnational crime. We can only succeed if we

cooperate and work together in this struggle, which affects every country equally.

A year ago, from this rostrum (see A/65/PV.15), I said that we should call the decade that was then just beginning the decade of Latin America and the Caribbean. I reaffirm that prediction now. Our region is an area of political and economic stability that is firmly determined to move forward with social policy. We have both the capability and the willingness to provide the world with solutions in the areas of the environment, water, energy, food and labour. But our region cannot grow or progress in isolation. We want to advance hand in hand with the world, sharing the principles of respect and tolerance. We welcome progress in prosperity wherever it occurs in the world.

That is why I would like to conclude by calling on the nations of the world and on the Organization that brings us together here to continue to work together to make use of the peaceful means at our disposal, with a new goal: to turn the crises we are experiencing today into opportunities for a better tomorrow. The future, as has always been the case, depends on us. With determination and positive leadership, we can convert these storms into winds favourable to the whole of humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

His Excellency Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jonathan: On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, I would like to congratulate the President on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I have no doubt that under his able leadership the work of the session will be brought to a successful conclusion. I should also like to acknowledge the excellent work done by his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, who guided the affairs of the sixty-fifth session with consummate skill and commitment.

I must also take this opportunity to extend my warmest felicitations to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his well-deserved re-election, a tribute to his leadership and vision. He deserves our appreciation for the good work he is doing on our behalf.

I also welcome the newest member of the Organization, the Republic of South Sudan. I am confident that South Sudan will bring a unique perspective to the work of the United Nations and enrich our collective experience.

Despite our initial optimism, the peace dividend we had hoped would accrue following the end of the Cold War is yet to materialize. On the contrary, the world of the twenty-first century in which we live is becoming ever more precarious, unpredictable and certainly more dangerous — perhaps more than at any other time in history. The increasing use of terror in various regions of the world as a form of political action poses a serious threat to international peace and security. We must win the war against terror because it infringes on the fundamental right of all peoples to life and to live in safety from fear.

Over the past few months, we in Nigeria have faced an upsurge in terrorist attacks in parts of our country. Only recently, the United Nations building in Abuja housing several United Nations agencies was the target of an atrocious terrorist attack that left several dead. On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, I would like to convey my sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the entire United Nations family for this barbaric and heinous attack on those who have dedicated their lives to helping others. As the United States and the rest of the world commemorate the tenth anniversary of the attacks of 9/11, we are reminded of the international

dimension of terrorism and the imperative of a concerted global response to combat this scourge.

For us in Nigeria, terrorist acts, rather than intimidating us, will only help to strengthen our resolve to develop appropriate national strategies and to collaborate even more closely with the international community in the fight against this menace. As part of Nigeria's efforts to fight terrorism, on 3 June, I signed into law a terrorism bill and an anti-money-laundering prohibition amendment act. The new laws not only outline measures for preventing and combating acts of terrorism, but also prohibit the financing of terrorism and laundering of the proceeds of crime. Nigeria will continue to work with the United Nations and other partners in this global fight.

To that end, Nigeria is working closely with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, as well as with relevant international bodies and friendly countries, in order to sharpen our response mechanisms. In that connection, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force will launch its first project in Abuja in November, which will be aimed at preventing conflict and countering the appeal of terrorism to youth through education and dialogue. In addition, Nigeria is a member of a new global body, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, launched to galvanize and help pull our efforts together to fight this scourge in all its ramifications. We pledge to continue to work with all stakeholders as we enlarge and intensify our partnerships.

When I stood before the Assembly last year, I made a solemn pledge that Nigeria would conduct free and credible elections in the second quarter of this year. I am glad to report that last April we indeed conducted what have been adjudged to be credible and transparent general elections. Let me take this opportunity to thank the United Nations and all the other organizations, nations and individuals that helped us to achieve that feat. The elections are now behind us, and the Government that I head is well on course to implement our programmes of transformation — a strategic plan for the delivery of the dividends of democracy to citizens and for preparing our country for the challenges of the future. Indeed, all across my country, there is a renewed sense of optimism and self-belief in our ability to recreate a new Nigeria on the principles of personal freedoms, democracy, good governance and the rule of law.

Permit me to identify with the theme of this year's debate of engaging the role of mediation in the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the world. The Assembly will recall that Nigeria was in the forefront of the campaign to promote this theme when, as the President of the Security Council in July 2010, my country adopted the use of preventive diplomacy to resolve armed conflicts across the world. This theme is apt and could not have come at a better time, when armed conflicts are increasingly taking a greater part of the time and resources of the United Nations.

For too long, the international community has focused too little attention on mediation and preventive diplomacy, and far too much effort and resources on the military aspects of peace and security. Yet measures to address the root cause of conflict, including dialogue and mediation, can be far more effective as a means for achieving sustainable peace and stability.

I believe that cultivating peace and fulfilling the aims of Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter require early identification and appropriate intervention in conflict situations in order to build confidence and trust and to preclude the eruption of violence between opposing parties. As I see it, our goal should always be to present the peaceful alternative as a less costly and effective way of achieving political and social objectives. I also believe that, in addition to other traditional tools of preventive diplomacy, democracy and good governance can be particularly important in building a just, equitable and inclusive society. By focusing on mediation as a tool for conflict prevention, we are able to address the real triggers of conflict, without which we cannot achieve sustainable solutions.

However, for the world to move from a culture of response after conflict to that of a culture of prevention, the international community must muster the political will to promote preventive diplomacy, in particular through mediation. This will necessarily entail rededicating greater human and financial resources to institutions and mechanisms that already exist, within and outside the United Nations system, for conflict prevention and resolution.

Going forward, I would like to propose the establishment, under the Secretary-General's Office, of a conflict mediation commission, to be charged, among other things, with collating information on conflict situations across the world, identifying the dramatis

personae and developing appropriate strategies for initiating the resolution of such conflicts. The commission would also develop rules of engagement, including sanctions that would apply to those who may obstruct efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully.

This naturally brings me to the issue of trafficking in small arms and light weapons. If the idea of resolving conflicts through mediation is to succeed, then the problem of trafficking in small arms and light weapons must be frontally tackled. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is particularly worrisome, due to their easy accessibility and availability to unauthorized persons and groups, who in turn have used these arms to create instability and insecurity in most of the countries of the developing world. Even worse, the proliferation of these weapons has proved handy in the hands of terrorists.

This explains our commitment to, and preoccupation with, the actualization of an arms trade treaty that robustly addresses the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which, as we all know, are among the major causes of destabilization and conflict in Africa. The danger of the proliferation of, and illicit trade in, small arms and light weapons informed Nigeria's decision to sponsor resolution 61/89, of 2006, the principal objective being to provide a legally binding international instrument for the trade in conventional arms. We will continue to support all initiatives towards the realization of an arms trade treaty in 2012. I call on all Member States to join in this endeavour.

The increasing rate of piracy and other maritime crimes, with their attendant damaging effects on security, trade and economic activities in the Gulf of Guinea and other locations, calls for coordinated regional and global approaches. In this respect, I would like to express support for the proposal of the Secretary-General to deploy a United Nations assessment mission to study the situation in the Gulf of Guinea and explore possible options for United Nations support and action. Our expectation is that a positive outcome from such a strategy will benefit not only our subregion but the larger international community as well. I am already consulting with other leaders in our subregion to boost this initiative.

The United Nations strategy for gender equality and women's empowerment, especially through the creation of UN-Women, deserves commendation and support. Nigeria's support for UN-Women, to which we have made substantial contributions, reflects our desire to harness the potential of women in the task of nation-building.

Our national action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment places strong emphasis on women's effective participation in politics and adequate representation in public office. I am indeed proud to announce to the Assembly that more than 30 per cent of my Cabinet is made up of women. Let me also commend the Executive Board of UN-Women on the successful take-off of the entity. UN-Women can be assured of Nigeria's strong support.

This year, the prevention of non-communicable diseases was one of the issues slated for discussion at a High-level Meeting. Only three months ago, I attended the High-level Meeting on AIDS, where I pledged Nigeria's commitment to health care, as part of our country's human capital development agenda. My Government is intensifying efforts to improve national health-care delivery by allocating substantial resources to primary health care. We look forward to a productive outcome to the High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases at the end of that meeting.

In the same vein, I welcome discussions at the High-level Meeting on desertification and land degradation, as these issues continue to pose challenges to our development efforts. That is why Nigeria strongly supports the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, including strategies and best practices to address this challenge.

In order to demonstrate our commitment to human rights, Nigeria recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and acceded to four other international human rights instruments, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

In addition, this year, my Government passed into law the National Human Rights Commission Amendment Act, the Legal Aid Council Amendment Act and the Freedom of Information Act. Nigeria will continue to accord the highest priority to human rights issues, as they speak directly to the dignity and inalienable rights of humankind.

We in West Africa are passing through an exciting season of democratic rebirth. Before the end of 2011, elections will have been held in six countries in West Africa. Those elections will set the respective countries along the path of political stability, progress, good governance and sustainable development — some of the benefits of which we have begun to experience. The progress we have made would not have been possible without the support of the United Nations.

The resolution of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire is a case in point. I consider the inauguration of President Ouattara a success not just for Côte d'Ivoire but also for the international community, which spoke with one voice and acted in concert in support of the Ivorian people. The end of that crisis must be seen by all as the beginning of our journey towards the consolidation of democratic culture and good governance in Africa. Having put that crisis behind us, the international community must now provide robust assistance to the country as it embarks on the tasks of post-conflict reconstruction and national reconciliation.

The struggle for self-governance and majority rule in Africa started in the 1940s; and by 1957 Ghana had gained independence. Today, all African States have achieved self-determination and majority rule. Those are no small achievements. But we still have much work to do. A great deal of the work that remains is to build viable and capable States in Africa on the principles of popular participation, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as we pledged to do in the Constitutive Act of the African Union. Nigeria believes that those values must remain at the core of governance in Africa if we are ever to achieve the goals of stability, security and development.

As Nigeria is approaching the end of its tenure on the Security Council, I would like to express my country's deep appreciation for the opportunity to serve in that important organ. In the course of our stewardship, the Council had the courage to reach many difficult decisions that resulted in positive developments around the world. We are proud to be associated with those decisions. I would like to urge the Council to continue its important work in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In spite of the Council's many successes, it is our belief that that important organ would benefit from the vigour and fresh perspectives that only a revamped Council accommodating changing global political realities can provide. I urge the President of the General Assembly to set up clear criteria for the reform of the Security Council in line with the demand of the majority of the world. A reformed Security Council is the only way to demonstrate that all nations have an equal stake in the United Nations. Nigeria looks forward to the prospect of membership in a reformed Security Council.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of Estonia

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: I would first of all like to congratulate Ambassador Al-Nasser on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly.

The twentieth anniversary this year of the restoration of Estonia's independence, not surprisingly, coincides with our twentieth year of membership in the United Nations and our participation in the General Assembly. Given where we were then, in 1991 — a poor and beleaguered country, brutalized by a half-century of thuggish Soviet, then Nazi, and then again Soviet occupation — our transformation in one generation to a modern, technologically cutting-edge European democracy is a testament to what a committed people can do. It is, as well, a challenge to those who find excuses for not implementing

democracy, for not eliminating corruption and for continuing to brutalize their citizens.

Today, 20 years after the bumbling coup and ensuing crumbling of that rusty edifice of totalitarianism, the Soviet Union, we again smell in the air the hope of liberty and democracy — this time in the Middle East and North Africa. Again people have come together and said, "Enough!" — of the lies, the corruption and the 3 a.m. knock on the door by the dull-brained goons of the secret police. People want to be able to speak their minds and to run their own lives, free of harassment, or worse, by the authorities. In a word, people want democracy. They want, too, the foundations of democracy: respect for human rights, the rule of law and the freedom of speech and assembly.

With those hopes in the hearts of so many people in this year of otherwise dismal and tawdry news, Estonia welcomes — indeed wholeheartedly encourages — the United Nations to move forward on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's decision to focus during his second term on democracy and human rights. Estonia welcomes that decision because, frankly, the results of the democracy movements of a generation ago have not even come close to what we hoped for at the time. Most of the people who lived under undemocratic rule two decades ago continue to do so today. Of what was the Soviet Union then, only Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have earned the designation "free" in Freedom House's annual report card on the rule of law, respect for fundamental freedoms and free and fair elections. That, I submit, is a poor result.

Each country and each situation is of course different. No textbook rules can tell us how to make democracy work or how to build a prosperous society. A few basic tenets and lessons, however, hold across nations, experiences and cultures. The United Nations own Universal Declaration of Human Rights — a document everyone here is obliged to adhere to — after all, is based on the premise of common truths held by all.

Democracy, as I said, is not only about voting and free and fair elections, vital though they are for any free and democratic society. Respect for human rights and the rule of law constitute the cornerstones of an open society. If one cannot speak their mind or be guaranteed a fair trial if arrested, it matters little that they can go to the polling booth. Rights and freedoms belong to each and every person. They are not the privilege of a select few with the money, the guns or the power.

For Estonia, it is of fundamental importance that the North African and Middle Eastern revolutions have been popular reactions to sustained violations of human rights, corruption and injustice. The revolutions confirm the universal aspiration to realize one's human rights. They show once again, as throughout history, that people naturally want to be free from fear and repression. Notice I said people, not "men". As long ago as 2,500 years ago, Aristotle noted that where "the state of women is bad, almost half of human life is spoilt". This is no less true today and will remain so. The ongoing revolutions could not have occurred and cannot succeed without women.

It is a profound source of concern to Estonia to notice that, while women are welcome to protest against corrupt regimes, they are not always welcome to participate in the political process. Estonia therefore places great hopes on the United Nations new gender entity, UN-Women, and will continue to insist that the United Nations as a whole do its part globally by standing up for women's rights. We also expect that UN-Women will play an active role in helping to take the principles of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security from paper to reality.

For as long as we have lived as a free nation, Estonia has always protected and promoted human rights and fundamental freedoms at home and abroad. Our candidature to the Human Rights Council is a logical consequence of our work, but it is certainly not the culmination as we continue to live up to our national and international obligations.

Once again, ongoing events underline the need for us to focus on the protection of civilians from atrocities. Even in the democratic part of my continent, the political project we today call the European Union was a reaction to mass murder and war. The very history of Europe motivates us to take preventive steps to avoid any repetition of such crimes. Therefore, it is vital that we develop common practices and the capacity to implement the principle of the responsibility to protect. Protecting civilians from atrocities, dear colleagues, is not just about protection.

It also means bringing the perpetrators of crimes and atrocities against civilians to justice.

International law, in particular the International Criminal Court, and the understanding that justice will be done, no matter how long it takes, are the tools we possess to prevent the worst human rights violations. The rule of law and respect for international law are what will help ravaged and victimized societies to regain their dignity and rebuild their communities. The common efforts of the international community, the International Criminal Court and its States parties remain a priority for my country.

While focusing on the pertinent issues of the present, we must not shy away from addressing the unresolved issues of the recent past. Afghanistan is one of those. Establishing lasting security there remains a key objective for Estonia. To reach that objective, we must focus on assisting Afghan efforts to further develop good governance and the rule of law. Along with human rights, these are the crucial elements of a sustainable society. We believe that we must all remain committed as long as is necessary to reach this goal. To that end, Estonia will continue to support the access of Afghans, in particular women and children, to health care and education through its development cooperation projects.

Georgia is another country that continues to require our attention. The 2008 war ended with the violation of Georgian territorial integrity, which is a fundamental violation of international law that remains unresolved to this day. The fundamental principles of international law must be followed by all members of the international community and not just the small, who have no other recourse. Additionally, we should continue to support the Geneva talks. The United Nations involvement is of the utmost importance and must continue in the future.

Here today in the United Nations, our attention is also focused on Israel and Palestine. A viable two-State solution must take into consideration the legitimate concerns of both sides for their well-being, safety and prosperity.

Another security- and human rights-related topic is the Internet, especially these days, when it has come to play such an important role in democratization by enabling political discussion and mobilizing popular movements. The Internet has grown beyond all expectations since people began to use it regularly some 20 years ago. Its global, ipso facto cross-border nature allows users the world over to access information and ideas, to communicate with each other and to learn. Estonia firmly believes that States should ensure that their people can freely seek, receive and impart information and ideas and have access to the Internet. In fact, Estonia believes that, in this technological age, unimpeded access to the Internet is a human right.

A transparent Government and administration, a liberal economic environment and a strong educational system all have contributed to Estonia's success. Estonia's development over the past 20 years is proof that information and communications technology can be a springboard to success for all States. We are quite willing to continue to share our experience, especially in increasing transparency and openness in Government, with other countries.

The Internet, however, poses many dangers as well. Increasingly disruptive cyberthreats and attacks that can seriously harm entire communities and, indeed, cause harm to countless individuals, are a new danger that we face. The large-scale cyberattacks against Estonia in 2007 created a new awareness among our people. The steps Estonia has taken towards a more secure Internet, however, do not restrict our people's freedoms. In fact, Freedom House's global assessment of Freedom on the Net 2011 rated Estonia as the freest in the world, demonstrating that a proper balance between rights and security can be found without compromising either.

We also bear responsibility for the environment we live in. It was no accident that the democratic revolutions of Central and Eastern Europe were accompanied, and indeed often instigated, by environmental movements. Citizens had become fed up with the totalitarian system's abuse of nature and disregard for human beings. Ignoring the state of its citizens' health and surroundings, the totalitarian State exposed itself to be what it was — a self-serving clique hell-bent on maintaining its power, no matter what the cost to its people, no matter what pain and suffering ensued.

Today, the challenge we face is global. It is climate change. Estonia's 2010 national security concept states that climate change is also a security issue and can have a destabilizing effect. Estonia already has decided to contribute to the fast-track

financing of efforts to combat climate change. We believe that sustainable development and the green economy need a global approach, as exemplified by preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development next year.

One already evident consequence of climate change is an increase in the number of people who need clean water and food. Estonia will continue to increase its contribution to the United Nations humanitarian system.

While the world's humanitarian needs grow, we require increased coordination and strict scrutiny of the real needs of aid recipients. As donor Governments, we are doubly accountable, first to those who require assistance; but we are also accountable to our taxpayers for the effective use of every Euro cent. If our taxpayers believe that Government is spending tax money unwisely or ineffectively, they will vote for a Government that cares less for foreign assistance expenditures. In these days of ever greater financial difficulty in donor countries themselves, this is not an observation to be ignored.

The many times I have addressed the General Assembly, I have deliberated on the nature of the United Nations and the need for reform. The United Nations needs to change as the world around us changes. System-wide coherence, delivering as one, and revitalization of the General Assembly are steps in the right direction.

We welcome these changes, yet at the same time Estonia sincerely hopes that the same spirit will prevail in reform of the Security Council. If nations are not given a fair and equitable voice, proportional and appropriate to its role in today's world — not the world of 1945 — we will find that the Organization has ever less credibility. I propose that we adopt a new attitude of openness to new developments in order to make sure that the United Nations as a whole can better deliver on the undoubtedly important issues for which it is responsible.

In conclusion, let me say that history did not end 20 years ago with the re-emergence of democratic nations in Central and Eastern Europe. Nor will history end with the Arab Spring. Democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development all require constant and consistent support and protection.

The world faces challenges, new and old. We face them daily. Today, as we commemorate the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attack ten years ago here in New York, we recognize how much the world has changed since the United Nations was founded 66 years ago. We must address and act upon these new challenges. It is we, the United Nations, who need to keep pace with changes and developments in the world we live in to protect and promote universal values across the globe.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Her Excellency Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Calmy-Rey (*spoke in French*): How can we shape development policy that is of benefit to all? The per capita gross domestic product of Switzerland is 130 times higher than that of a country such as Mozambique. Why do the poorest countries benefit so little from globalization, and what can we do to change this? One-quarter of the world's population consumes three-quarters of the available raw materials. How can we ensure that nearly 7 billion individuals have enough water, food and energy at affordable prices? And what happened to equity and social justice in the twenty-first century?

It is up to us together to find the answers to these questions. That will require us to have a sense of responsibility and to be ready to reflect together on norms, values and priorities.

More than any other international organization, the United Nations has the potential and the necessary

conditions to support States in these efforts. Since its founding, the United Nations has developed into a dense institutional network. International governance remains fragmented and inefficient. Governance structures need to be strengthened if the United Nations is to succeed as the driving force towards sustainable development.

Events in the Arab world have been a reminder that democracy and sustainable development go hand in hand. Indeed, it was ultimately the lack of political freedom, combined with injustice and a lack of economic prospects, that unleashed the fundamental changes that have so surprised us. Many nations are facing difficult changes today and the fact that relations among States and between the region and the rest of the world need to be based on new principles. This is a challenge to the countries themselves and to the new social groups driving the change: youth, women, the emerging middle classes and civil society as a whole. But it is also a challenge to the countries and Governments of the region, as well as for us all as Members of the United Nations.

We must do our best to ensure that effective aid is provided quickly to the victims of unrest and violence. We must ensure that security and the rule of law are strengthened. We must contribute to inclusive political dialogue, promoting national reconciliation and legitimate efforts to create new constitutions. We must extend the authority of State institutions and restore public services. We must help to protect the human rights of all and support transitional justice. We must also support immediate economic recovery measures. Only through such a wide-ranging programme, backed by an international community in which each member is ready to make a constructive contribution, will it be possible to create more favourable conditions for sustainable development.

I note with regret that the spirit of optimism borne of the Arab Spring has not breathed new life into the Middle East peace process. We remember the words of President Obama before the General Assembly a year ago well — words that encouraged us to hope for change. For a few minutes, we dreamed together of

> "the young girl in Gaza who wants to have no ceiling on her dreams or the young boy in Sderot who wants to sleep without the nightmare of rocket fire" (*A/65/PV.11, p. 12*).

We entertained the hope that, together with Palestine and Israel, we could succeed in reaching an agreement that would allow us to welcome a new Member to the United Nations — a sovereign and independent Palestine, living side by side in peace with Israel.

Somberly, we note instead that the past year has been a year of deadlock with no progress but stagnation, and even a hardening of positions. For more than 60 years, the international community has failed to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The so-called peace process has replaced peace. In order to return peace to the centre of the stage, influential people on both sides have attempted to implement a tangible and lasting vision. We gave them our support and facilitated a model agreement. The Geneva initiative is today a consolidated, detailed proposal compatible with internationally accepted parameters, including the Arab Peace Initiative. It remains at the disposal of the decision-makers, as well as of the populations whose right it is to demand peace.

Preventing future wars was the goal of the founding of the United Nations. Today, it remains among the noblest objectives of this Organization. The past two decades have shown that the international community has every interest in finding ways to strengthen its efforts in the area of mediation. Indeed, it is in a negotiated solution rather than military victory that a lasting solution will be found for the majority of conflicts.

The Security Council plays an important role in the prevention of conflicts. Switzerland would welcome a stronger and more lasting commitment to preventive diplomacy on the part of the Security Council. If the Security Council is to be able to make a worthwhile contribution to peace and security, it must adapt to new realities and reflect the new political balance of power of the twenty-first century. I should also like it to be more transparent and open and to fulfil its duty of remaining accountable to the Member States.

Ultimately, the decisions of the Security Council have a direct impact on all States in ways that are legally binding. That is why Switzerland advocates, along with its partners in the so-called small five group, improvement of the Council's working methods. The small five's proposals are practical and concrete. They can be implemented immediately without any need to amend the United Nations Charter.

However, the United Nations will be truly strengthened only if those countries that rightly insist on having greater participation also show themselves ready to accept greater responsibility for the Organization's proper functioning and its financial situation.

The United Nations is unique in being the only Organization that offers all the countries of the world the opportunity to join together to address the whole range of international challenges to peace and security, ranging from the protection of human rights to sustainable development. Switzerland is ready to contribute, and we look forward to working together with the new President of the General Assembly, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, whom I congratulate on his election and offer the full support of my country during this sixty-sixth session of the Assembly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 2.55 p.m.